













# BERNARD SHAW EXPLAINED

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF THE  
SHAVIAN REVISION

BY

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TO  
*MY FRIEND*  
MARGARET

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SHAVIAN AFFINITIES

BEFORE proceeding to expound the religion of George Bernard Shaw, as set forth in his writings, it will be necessary to convince many people that he has a religion.

Is Mr. Shaw to be taken seriously, or is he the mere *farceur* of popular imagination? How far do the witticisms quoted in the Press from his latest speech or play, and in which ordinary common sense seems to be turned upside down, represent the real man? What are we to make of those interviews in which the unexpected is dazzlingly stated as if for the mere purpose of challenging the conventional? And the many punches he delivers on the noses of even the elect: what shall we make of them?

Many years ago Lord Salisbury said that what the people wanted was a circus. Shaw decided to oblige; so accordingly he donned the motley, stood on his head, and performed verbal jugglery, until his reputation as a clown was established. Unfortunately, when later he became converted to religion he demanded a pit filled with philosophers—from a public which appreciated him only as a jester!

Once it was necessary to stand upon his head to attract a crowd; and old habits are difficult to unlearn, even after the chalked face and red nose have been dispensed with in favour of the apron and the gaiters.

Mr. Shaw, once an Atheist, has now sincerely got a religion; but, however deeply he feels the gravity of the

call, he cannot refrain from making jokes both on and off the stage, which is his pulpit. He is a congenital leg-puller, and he finds fanatics irresistible. His own extravagancies are chiefly verbal, consciously committed, with much sound sense underlying the wildest words. He has the brain of a philosopher, with the impishness of an urchin; he is a kind of hybrid Peter Pan, one half of him resolutely refusing to grow up.

He seriously regards himself as a prophet of the new religion—with, however, no desire to found a sect. He has more wit than emotion, so uses satire rather than hysteria upon the follies of his time. As religious prophets usually denounce and weep—getting killed or performing miracles by way of advertisement—an amusing member of the profession is apt to be misunderstood.

When speaking on one occasion before the followers of the late Charles Bradlaugh, who (*vide* Mr. Shaw) were considering him as a successor, the lecturer, anxious to shock his Secularist audience, announced that he believed both in the Trinity and the Immaculate Conception. His hearers were thrown "into transports of rage," which provided "an exceedingly pleasant evening." In the printed lecture describing the entertainment Mr. Shaw explains why he believes the two aforementioned dogmas are "the most obvious common sense." When asked how one person can be three and three persons one, he replied:—

You are the father of your son and the son of your father. I am not satisfied with three persons, any more than Shelley was satisfied with three primary colours in the rainbow: he called it the million-colored bow. I am prepared to believe, not only in a trinity, but in a trillion-trinity. Do you mean to say, they demanded, that you believe in the immaculate conception of Jesus? Certainly, I

replied : I believe in the immaculate conception of Jesus' mother ; and I believe in the immaculate conception of your mother. They simply collapsed : they had not the wit to ask me the simple question, Did I believe in parthenogenesis. To that question I should have said, No.

This method of serving up old wine in new bottles without altering the labels may help to explain why, after forty years of preaching, Mr. Shaw is obliged to admit that he has failed to produce any appreciable effect on public opinion. In the minds of some people, however, there has been achieved one effect : confused exasperation. And if it is true, as Shaw says, "that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life and death," it is high time somebody else attempted to purvey the Shavian brand of the milk of the word, even if it loses some of its cream in the process.

Hence this book.

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Having sought to establish Mr. Shaw as a serious man who is not always able to maintain his gravity, we will next consider his inspirers. Although on occasion refusing to be regarded as the follower of any man, and always manifesting noticeable independence of judgment, originality is also disclaimed. Indeed, originality is stated to be merely a new way of tickling the public ear. In Shaw's works his spiritual benefactors are listed and thanked with a modesty and deference hard to reconcile with the confidence and conceit usually assumed to be among his leading qualities.

Mr. Shaw's affinities are not confined to one country or profession. Philosophers, painters, and musicians are to be found side by side with poets, novelists, and playwrights. The Mystic has a place as well as the Christian and the Atheist.



The list of twelve names, given in the Preface to *Man and Superman*, of men with an outlook similar to his own comprises Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth, Turner, Morris, Shelley, Wagner, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Ibsen.

After *Man and Superman* was published many of the critics contended that the author's leading conception had been borrowed from Nietzsche. So Mr. Shaw in his next publication accordingly read them a lesson for belittling the influence of their own countrymen on his work. He then acclaimed Samuel Butler (the author of *Erewhon*, *The Way of All Flesh*, etc.) as one to whom he was much more indebted than to the German thinker; Butler being, in his own department, "the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century." He also protested against the conclusion that his outstanding views were echoes of Schopenhauer, Ibsen, Tolstoy, or some other heresiarch in northern or eastern Europe. He proceeded to give the names of other home-bred inspirers, such as Charles Lever, Belfort Bax, Captain Wilson, and Stuart Glennie, as writers who had familiarized him with certain attitudes long before he had become acquainted with the Continental writers from whom he was accused of borrowing.

Shaw's political thinking has been influenced by his Fabian colleague, Mr. Sidney Webb, of whose abilities he has a high opinion. He wrote in 1920:—

The most devoted and indefatigable, the most able and disinterested, students of this [political] science in England, as far as I know, are my friends Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who have published several treatises comparable to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

Many years before he said: "Sidney Webb was of more use to me than any other man I ever met, and will be of more use to England than any other man of his

time." This opinion becomes significant to-day, when the national destinies are influenced so much by the Labour Party, whose programme has been largely inspired by the subject of Shaw's eulogy.

The blending of the very moderately minded Sidney Webb with the rather unmanageable list of rebels and eccentrics previously given illustrates those two pronounced elements in the temperament of Mr. Shaw himself. There is an abundance of shrewd common sense and regard for practicalities mixed up with what seems to be irresponsible and fantastic iconoclasm.

Lamarck, the eighteenth-century French evolutionist, is also hailed as a master; but Samuel Butler probably supplied the chief guidance in matters biological, although in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, where Shaw's evolutionary theories are expounded, Lamarck is the name constantly referred to.

Finally, although not included in the Pantheon, there is the closest similarity between Professor Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and the Life Force conception of Mr. Shaw.

Jesus Christ, though receiving honourable mention, is too much Shavianized to be regarded as one of Shaw's schoolmasters. Indeed, that is a feature of Mr. Shaw's psychology. He writes the *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, *The Perfect Wagnerite*, and an exposition of the teaching of Jean Lamarck; and all of them are shown to be pre-Shavian by having convenient meanings read into their utterances, which probably no one but Mr. Shaw has been able to discover. This practice of proving that eminent men were Shavians without knowing it may be considered as undue modesty on the part of their expositor when he hails them as his forerunners, or may be regarded as an attempt to clothe heterodox views with the respectable mantles of celebrities.

## CHAPTER II

### FREE WILL AND PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

THAT extremely able writer, the late W. H. Mallock, defined the three essential dogmas of religion as belief in Free Will, Personal Immortality, and God. It will be interesting to discover their place in the religious philosophy of Bernard Shaw.

Shaw speaks of Determinism as "a soulless stupidity" which represents "man as a dead object driven hither and thither by his environment, antecedents, circumstances, and so forth."

Not only is Determinism stupid, but we are reminded by Shaw of the absurdities and cruelties into which we are led by the "counter stupidity to Determinism, the doctrine of Free Will." He gives numerous examples of the limitations on the freedom of the will, and decides that "for practical dealing with crime Determinism or Pre-destination is quite a good working rule."

Elsewhere he oscillates between statements which suggest, on the one hand, that whatever is willed by the organism can be achieved—longevity, new organs, muscles, eyes, etc.—and, on the other, that it is nonsense to suppose that even under sentence of death one without a musical ear could be compelled to hum all the themes of Beethoven, however much he desired to do so. We are thus left in doubt as to Shaw's actual views on the subject.

However unsatisfactory his opinions on Free Will may seem, he is certainly clear and definite enough upon the subject of personal immortality. One of the

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main ideas in the *Back to Methuselah* cycle of plays is that the present span of life is too short to enable individual man to master the secrets of civilized existence. Death comes just when some glimmerings of wisdom have been achieved; hence we must by insistent willing get back to the duration of life enjoyed by Methuselah. But when death does come, individual life is ended for ever, however much its influence may be absorbed and extended in the social heritage. As the extension of life is the result of the human propulsion of desire, its cessation is also yearned for by those whose longevity is found too burdensome.

An eternity of existence is fearful even in contemplation. In the *Garden of Eden* play Adam is overwhelmed by the thought of the burden of eternity laid upon him if humanity is to be represented on the earth for ever. His problem is that without knowing how to achieve parenthood man must persist in a world where he and Eve are the sole representatives.

"If only there may be an end some day, and yet no end!" he wails. "If only I can be relieved of the horror of having to endure myself for ever!..... If only the rest and sleep that enable me to bear it from day to day could grow after many days into an eternal rest, an eternal sleep, then I could face my days however long they may last. Only there must be some end, some end! I am not strong enough to bear eternity."

Afterwards, when by reproduction human perpetuity has been won without the necessity for personal survival, he says to Cain:—

I have known what it is to sit and brood under the terror of eternity, of immortality.....Be thankful to your parents who enabled you to hand on your burden to new and better men, and won for you eternal rest.

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That this horror of immortality is shared by Shaw is proved by the following quotation :—

If some devil were to convince us that our dream of personal immortality is no dream but a hard fact, such a shriek of despair would go up from the human race as no other conceivable horror could provoke.....what man is capable of the insane self-conceit of believing that an eternity of himself would be tolerable even to himself ?<sup>1</sup>

Heaven and Hell are to Shaw, as to most other enlightened men, not places but states of mind, enjoyed or suffered, before and not after death. The theological heaven excites his derision. As he rightly claims, a place where perfection has been achieved, a static universe where there is no possibility of further advance and therefore nothing for the reformers to do but suffer an eternity of sugary joy, would be hell to any being with a consciousness more complex than that of a slug. An eternity of sucking spiritual chocolate creams has no attraction, and heaven is dismissed as "a sort of bliss which would bore any active person to a second death."

Shaw's heaven is to be achieved in a man's heart when he conceives a purpose in the universe making for intenser consciousness, keener insight, higher organization, more abundant life, and is willing to be used as its servant. The pursuit of personal pleasure brings hell. Those sense enjoyments which lull men into contented acceptance of the muddle and waste of human life are drugs. Even "music is the brandy of the damned." Good people follow a light that shines inside and outside of them, and are saved and blessed ; while bad people, caring only for themselves, are damned and miserable. Death for most of us is not the opening of the gate into hell, but rather the means of escape from it.

<sup>1</sup> Preface on "Parents and Children," pp. v-vi.

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In the famous dream scene in *Man and Superman* (containing Shaw's most stimulating piece of writing) Don Juan in hell is suffering the boredom of the damned. As Jesus was tempted by Satan, so does the latter tempt Don Juan, by offering him dominion over a complete world of enjoyments—delights sensuous and artistic. "Hell, in short, is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself." But Don Juan resists the persistent solicitations to stay as guest of the Devil, preferring a heaven of mental abstraction where he can spend his days in contemplative speculation upon how the Life Force may achieve its upward destiny, for in heaven "you live and work" and think.

Says Ana: "Is there nothing in heaven but contemplation, Juan?" Don Juan replies: "In the heaven I seek, no other joy. But there is the work of helping life in its struggle upward."

A heaven is desired where a brain may be evolved which will show how to prevent the waste and to destroy the obstacles hindering the further advance of the Life Force.

Shaw himself refers almost ecstatically to the satisfaction of being used up to the last particle of vitality in the service of what others would call social duty or the spirit of progress.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

That, then, is heaven: to incessantly conceive the high thought, and to use one's vitality endeavouring to realize it in action. Hell is the state of mind of the persistent

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seeker after pleasure who does not see or will not heed the purpose which some men call God. There are no rejoicings in this heaven at the miserable joys of the damned ; no fixed barriers of flaming swords or brimstone ramparts between sinner and saved. The gateways to either are as free as those leading to the philosopher's class-room, to the bull-ring or football match ; but as mental and moral barriers separate bull-ring from class-room, so is hell divided from heaven. We drift into one, or will ourselves into the other, according to temperament, desire, and circumstance.

## CHAPTER III

### EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF CHRIST

IN dealing with Jesus Christ, Bernard Shaw does not follow some of the older historians by putting in the mouth of his subject speeches representing his own opinions; nor is Christ used, as Plato used Socrates, to ventilate Shaw's own theories; but, to a large extent, personal meanings are read into the words of Christ in order to demonstrate the similarity of his main conceptions to those of Shaw himself.

At the outset of his career Shaw took every opportunity of publicly terming himself an Atheist, and at one time he appears to have doubted even the historical existence of Jesus Christ, this latter position being by no means as uncommon as Christians suppose. But later the Rev. R. J. Campbell satisfied him that Jesus had actually existed. As on many occasions it has been contended by the orthodox that Shaw's conversion to Christianity was complete, a few quotations had better be given to show how erroneous is the notion.

In his reply to Max Nordau, entitled *The Sanity of Art* (1895), the Christian God is described as a "frightfully jealous and vindictive old gentleman sitting on a throne above the clouds." In his essay *On Going to Church* (1896) he concludes by saying: "I regard St. Athanasius as an irreligious fool—that is, in the only serious sense of the word, a damned fool." In *Man and Superman* (1903) he contends that "Christianity means nothing to the masses but a sensational public execution," and that "the discovery of the wide prevalence of theophagy



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as a tribal custom has deprived us of the last excuse for believing that our official rites differ in essentials from those of barbarians." In the Preface to *Major Barbara* (1905) we learn that "popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its chief sensation a sanguinary execution after torture, and for its central mystery an insane vengeance bought off by a trumpety execution." In the same Preface he says: "Creeds must be intellectually honest. At present there is not a single credible established religion in the world." He wrote in the *Freethinker* (November 1, 1908): "I loathe the mass of mean superstition and misunderstood prophecies which is still rammed down the throats of the children of this country under the name of Christianity as contemptuously as ever." In a lecture on *Modern Religion* (delivered March 21, 1912) he said: "You have your personal God; and he is either an Almighty Fiend, according to Shelley, or a sentimental dupe." In the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion* (1915) he finally disposes of the idea of his orthodoxy by saying definitely: "I am no more a Christian than Pilate was or you, gentle reader." His love for the average Christian may be gathered from a couple of statements in *Modern Religion*: "Any man of honor is a religious man," but, "obviously, the majority of Christians to-day have not any religion, and they have less of Christianity than of any religion on earth." The honour of the majority of "Christians," therefore, does not loom conspicuously on the horizon of Mr. Shaw. And again, in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah* (1921), we are told that the Church of England has no legitimate place in the counsels of the British Commonwealth, and is "at present a corrupter of youth, a danger to the State, and an obstruction to the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

Even at the time when there seemed a faint possi-

bility of an *entente* with that very attenuated form of Christianity once known as the New Theology, an address delivered by Shaw from the pulpit of the City Temple on October 30, 1913, illustrated the wide divergence of views. The speaker said he "did not profess to be a Christian," and that Christ was the first and last Christian. Before he could come inside the fold not only heaven and hell, but any pretence of a doctrine of atonement, must be dropped. The fall and the expiation were dismissed as well as the assumed omnipotence and omniscience of God.

We may now with profit consider the long Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, where we have an elaborate summary of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as they appear to Bernard Shaw. Reversing his first position of doubting the historical existence of Jesus, Shaw now claims that it is really the so-called believers who doubt that Jesus was ever an authentic living person. The proof is found in the horror evoked if a real believer wonders how Christ would have looked if he had shaved and had a hair-cut, what size he took in shoes, or whether he swore when he stood on a nail in the carpenter's shop! The dismay provoked in the worshippers by these natural signs of interest show that Jesus has never been conceived by them as an actual person whose views only need to be applied to provoke a revolution in the affairs of men. Shaw, on the other hand, regards Jesus as one who preached a message worthy of serious consideration.

Mr. Shaw, though claiming to know a great deal more about economics and politics than Jesus did, is prepared to agree that many of the demands of Jesus must be accepted as good sense and sound economics, if only suitable political machinery can be invented to enable them to work.

But these doctrines are not dependent upon Jesus, and

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had he never existed they would have been preached by others. Indeed, many of their advocates have been militant Atheists. Certain ideals have been considered good by mankind, and Jesus of Nazareth has been accepted as their personification. Even Jesus himself mistakenly came to believe he was the Christ, the symbol of divinity. This notion, that he was God, led to his execution for blasphemy, when, under similar circumstances to-day, "we should have treated him as a madman."

Jesus was always inclined to be abusive, bad-tempered, and haughty; and "'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,' is a snivelling modern invention with no warrant in the gospels.....The picture of him as an English curate of the farcical comedy type, too meek to fight a policeman, and everybody's butt, may be useful in the nursery to soften children; but that such a figure could ever have become a centre of the world's attention is too absurd for discussion."

Matthew more than once reports Jesus as being extremely uncivil in private intercourse. Throughout this gospel his manner is that of the son of an aristocrat, and by no means a lowly-minded one at that.

In spite of these temperamental defects, Jesus at first is sane and interesting, preaching many valuable ethical truths. But one day a startling change occurs. He is acclaimed by Peter as the Christ, son of the living God. "At this Jesus is extraordinarily pleased and excited." He becomes inflamed with the conviction of his divinity, and talks about it continually to his disciples. "Always somewhat haughty, he now becomes arrogant, dictatorial, and even abusive, never replying to his critics without an insulting epithet, and even cursing a fig-tree which disappoints him when he goes to it for fruit." "He forgets his own teaching and threatens eternal fire and

eternal punishment." So unbalanced is he that, "if Jesus had been indicted in a modern court, he would have been examined by two doctors; found to be obsessed by a delusion; declared to be incapable of pleading; and sent to an asylum."

Mr. Shaw then proceeds to explain how this delusion of divinity was possible, and how it came to be accepted by the people as a truth. A short sketch of the evolution of the religious imagination is given.

The religion of Salvationism accepted by the Christian is only a more comforting version of the negroes' crude creed. Endless things happen in the world of Nature, and primitive people feel obliged to assume something responsible for both good and evil. Hence gods and devils are invented. Those powers are propitiated with prayers, with presents called sacrifices, and with flatteries called praises.

Later the moral sense conceives the god as a judge to be corrupted with more presents and flatteries, as earthly judges were bribed in the time of Shakespeare. This gives an advantage to the rich, but prevents the poor from winning divine favour. The poor therefore rebel against the custom, and a religious movement develops as a protest against buying off God's anger with bribes.

Primitive justice is partly legalized revenge, and partly expiation by sacrifice. Compensation, either by personal suffering or loss of property, is accepted in payment for a wrong endured. The idea of human sacrifice is introduced into religion on the same basis, and malefactors and prisoners of war are offered on the altar in expiation for sin. But the practice of sacrificing a criminal to placate the anger of God is later seen to be merely an excuse for gratifying the feeling of revenge. As these offerings entail no sacrifice on the part of the worshipper,

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an expiation involving personal loss is felt to be requisite if he is to feel completely saved. But the cost of purchasing salvation by the loss of a sheep or ram is, in turn, felt as a burden, and mystical rites are substituted. The sense of justice again revolts and demands a real expiation—if possible, a human sufferer—for man's sins.

At last imagination suggests that, instead of a separate atonement for each sin, one great redeemer shall atone by his voluntary sacrifice for all the sins of the world. This method of compounding with God brings the comforting feeling that expiation has been made more impressive than by the sacrifice of sheep or rams, the cost of which was especially felt by the poor.

The altars are torn down, the victims cease to bleed, and the Redeemer is anxiously awaited. He is conceived under many names—Balder the Beautiful, Christ the Messiah, and a score of others. The people seethe with expectation, and their priests cry aloud the prophecies until the social atmosphere is tense with belief in the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah and others add their voices to the clamour. Luke and John take up the theme, until finally the subtle theology of Luther and Calvin gives a finished form to this conception of Salvationism.

Whereas in India men torture themselves to attain holiness and atonement by personal suffering, the vicarious atonement was a triumph of imagination and cheapness, especially as achieved by the Reformation. Paul, however, first advocated the abolition of the charge for admission into heaven.

Another aspect of religious development is revealed when we study the logic of those who consider that by eating a beef-steak they achieve the strength of the bull. Savages believe that by consuming the heart of a tiger

they will absorb his ferocity ; and the conception is even extended to the courage of human enemies. Hence grows up a belief in the efficacy of cannibalism—a belief quite unconnected with the idea of merely satisfying the pangs of hunger. The notion that by consuming the flesh one could absorb the spiritual qualities was applied to the god whose divine essence could be assimilated by eating his body or drinking his blood.

Further, the mystery of vegetation, with its periods of apparent death in winter and its resurrection in spring, seemed to imply immortality. God was in the seed ; and thus, even when it was buried in the ground, it would rise again, renewed in life, and able to supply vigour to the men who consumed the harvest.

From the blending of these two ideas with the craving for the Redeemer is born the conviction that when he comes he will be immortal, giving us his body to eat and his blood to drink ; he will rise from death by resurrection as does the grain year by year.

There has always, continues Mr. Shaw, been among the poor a belief in the end of the world, which will be replaced by a kingdom of justice and bliss, in which rich oppressors will have no share. The end of the world will coincide with the coming of the John Barleycorn god ; and heaven and hell are grafted upon the conception by rulers and others in order to curb the vicious and to console the poor and keep them from insurrection.

The last tradition to be noted before popular Christianity becomes intelligible is that of the divine god. The consummation of praise to an ancient king was to declare he was the son of a god ; the Roman emperors even claimed the title of God ; but these kings also liked to be descended from a royal house, so that no doubt should exist of their earthly *bona fides*. Alexander

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of Macedon, while claiming to be the son of Apollo, was equally insistent upon being recognized as the son of Philip. Thus the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke give genealogies tracing the descent of Jesus through Joseph back to the royal house of David—the gospels at the same time contending that the Holy Ghost was the immediate father of Jesus!

Bearing the above factors of early tradition in mind, Mr. Shaw then examines in detail the four gospels, noting contradictions and omissions. Matthew and Mark treat the story of Jesus as a fulfilment of ancient traditions. Luke is a literary artist who softens down the harsh facts by art or omission, giving to every incident he mentions the charm of sentimental romance. The logic of Luke is weak. His Jesus is the popular Jesus introducing the feminine interest. John makes Jesus say contradictory and apparently nonsensical things. He portrays him as being an educated and sophisticated mystic, quite different in character from the simple preacher of Matthew and Mark. His account is hopelessly irreconcilable with that of Matthew, but "is almost as bad in his repeated explanations of Christ's actions having no other purpose than to fulfil the old prophecies." It is John who adds to the other records the reminder that men are gods, that "God is a spirit," and that Jesus said "I and my father are one."

Shaw then proceeds, after rejecting the more fantastic aspects of the gospels and Salvationist Christianity in general, to set down what he regards as the essential teachings of Jesus. These doctrines are as follows:—

1. God and man are one.
2. The wickedness of private property.
3. Punishment of criminals must be abolished.
4. The drawbacks of marriage and of family relationships.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FOUR DOCTRINES OF JESUS

IN his interpretation of the four doctrines of Jesus, which he assumes contain the gist of his practical teaching, Shaw repeats the trick previously performed with Ibsen and Wagner, and reads fantastic meanings into the phrases of Jesus, until he persuades himself that Christ was a complete Shavian, who needed only a course of Fabian lectures to make him the political saviour of the world. Jesus is applauded as biologist, economist, and criminologist rolled in one, arriving at conclusions which the latest science is obliged to confirm. Had it been necessary, doubtless Shaw's ingenuity would have shown that Jesus was also a vegetarian, an anti-vivisector, and a determined opponent of vaccination, with an abhorrence of starched shirts, to bring him still closer to the Shavian programme.

The fact is that, with much less straining of meanings than Mr. Shaw employs, it could be demonstrated from the same authorities that Jesus supported wine-bibbing, monarchy, poverty, revenge, vindictive punishment, war, scorned money, enjoined meekness and self-denial, and in numerous other ways showed himself to be opposed to some of the fundamental tenets of the Shavian cult. With manipulation, support for almost any views can be obtained from the New Testament; and Shaw has merely followed the example of other religion-makers by adding to and taking from the teaching of Jesus whatever was needed to square it with the new evangel. The advantage he has in assuming that certain theories he accepts are



confirmed by the main doctrines of Jesus Christ lies in the fact that whatever he does not agree with can always be attributed to the delusion. What Shaw accepts can be called sanity; what he rejects can be called madness. But if the teaching of Jesus is taken as a whole, very little real support can be found for assuming that his practical views were those ascribed to him.

The first doctrine Shaw attributes to Jesus reads as follows:—

The kingdom of heaven is within you. You are the son of God; and God is the son of man. God is a spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not an elderly gentleman to be bribed and begged from. We are members one of another; so that you cannot injure or help your neighbour without injuring or helping yourself. God is your father; you are here to do God's work: and you and your father are one.

If Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is within, implying heaven is a state of mind, he also taught that heaven was a place to be enjoyed after death by those who believed in him. He certainly never taught that God was the son of every man,<sup>1</sup> nor did he teach "you and your father are one," but "*I and my Father are one.*" If man is also God, how can God be a spirit, unless man is also a spirit? And if man is a spirit, what becomes of Shaw's statement in *Modern Religion* that "we have to face the fact that we are a very poor lot"? Are we to worship this "very poor lot," which is man and also God? But Shaw does not believe God and man are one, for, as we shall see later, he implies that "God" was in the universe ~~æons~~ before man—that "God," in fact,

<sup>1</sup> This is simply a quibble based on the fact that Jesus sometimes speaks of himself as the Son of Man. But to make it apply Shaw must accept the belief of Jesus that he was also God, in a unique sense denied to the rest of mankind.

created man to do God's work, and will supersede man if he fails. If God and man are one, God will thus have to supersede itself. Shaw's whole assumption that Jesus generally taught that the kingdom of heaven was inside a man and was not a place, and that man is God, is contradicted throughout the Gospels scores of times. Earth and heaven are constantly put in opposition: as "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"; lay not up treasures on earth, but in heaven; heaven is God's throne, earth is his footstool; a voice from heaven said "This is my son"; great is your reward in heaven; till heaven and earth pass away, etc. Heaven is pictured in the sky, for stars are to fall from heaven; the sign of the Son of man is to appear in heaven, and he is to come "in the clouds of heaven," heralded by angels who shall gather his elect from the four winds, "from one end of heaven to the other." God, residing in this stellar heaven, is an entirely different being from man with whom Shaw tries to identify him.

Speaking to men, Jesus says: "Ye are the light of the world," and the light must shine "to glorify your Father which is in heaven." This same heavenly Father is described as feeding the birds and making the grass to grow, the sun to rise, and the rain to fall. All these things are impossible to man, conceived either in a physical or a spiritual sense. Man and God, therefore, were not identical in the belief of Jesus. He did *not* teach "you and your father are one."

The second doctrine Shaw confirms reads:—

Get rid of property by throwing it into the common stock. Dissociate your work entirely from money payments. If you let a child starve, you are letting God starve. Get rid of all anxiety about to-morrow's dinner and clothes, because you cannot serve two masters—God and Mammon.

If "God and man are one," and we are here to do God's work, then we are here to do man's work. Shaw says you cannot serve two masters—God and Mammon. But if God is oneself, and one serves Mammon also to benefit oneself, one can consistently work for the two. Here Shaw forgets God and man are one, and apparently assumes God represents only an aspect of man: the nobler part as against the ignoble. Mammon is the symbol of money, which by inference is contrasted unfavourably with God as an object of service. And this is from a man who says:—

Money is the most important thing in the world ; .....it is life. The first duty of every citizen is to insist on having money on reasonable terms.....the crying need of the nation is not for better morals..... but for enough money.<sup>1</sup>

If money is the most important thing in the world, if it is life, in serving the Life Force we are serving the same master, for God and Mammon are one. But if, as Jesus believed, God and Mammon are two opposing tendencies, and God must claim our allegiance, how is this to be reconciled with Shaw's panegyric on the importance of money?

Christ said "take no thought for the morrow"; get rid of your riches. Why did he say this? Firstly, because he thought riches were a hindrance to spiritual development; and, secondly, because he believed in the speedy cessation of the material world. Indeed, to Shaw, this second belief was part of his delusion; and, in any case, our "Father which art in heaven" was expected to provide our daily bread.

But Shaw does not believe in a supernatural God who will provide bread without man's exertions, nor in the

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Major Barbara*, p. 160.

end of the world as a reason for abolishing private property; nor does he teach by example or precept that riches are a hindrance to man's upliftment. Moreover, he denounces material poverty as the supreme sin to be eradicated at once from the body politic. There is no indication that Jesus expected or desired the abolition of poverty, his reference to the poor being always with us plainly showing how unimportant it was as compared to higher things. His blessings on the poor in spirit and on the meek are also in flat contradiction to anything ever taught by Shaw. Jesus did not teach Communism, as Shaw implies, but alms-giving, which is utterly alien to its principles. In the incident from which Shaw apparently gets his idea of the Communistic views of Christ, Jesus says to the young man who wants to have eternal life: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." There is no injunction here to sell *all* one's possessions, and in any case nothing about giving *all* to the poor, but merely to give something; in other words, alms-giving or charity is enjoined. This is far removed from the Communism which pools all the property.

Even here other treasures—a hundred-fold—which were to last for ever, were promised in compensation and as a reward for holiness in general. But Shaw ridicules the very idea of a man receiving either material or heavenly treasures as a reward for merit. "The Sunday-school idea," he says, "with its principle 'to each the income he deserves,' is really too silly for discussion." He claims Jesus as an ally in spite of the fact that the whole of the New Testament morality is based upon rewards for the worthy and punishment for the unworthy (belief being included in the former category and unbelief in the latter).

The Greek maxim, "First secure an independent in-

come, and then practise virtue," which Shaw heartily endorses, is the very opposite to the advice of Jesus to take no thought for the morrow in respect to material needs. Apparently we are not to be greatly concerned about how we secure the income, for in the Preface to his novel, *The Irrational Knot*, Shaw, recalling his more impecunious days, when, although he could enjoy music and art to his heart's content, he had not a decent morning suit, bemoans the fact that he did not then see "that to remedy this I should have been prepared to wade through seas of other people's blood " He goes on to tell us that every "twaddler" who denies or suppresses the fact that money is the most important thing in the world "is an enemy of life."

Our governing classes, he contends, while being prepared to be generous, charming, and cultured in the second instance, "are unalterably resolved in the first to have money enough for a handsome and delicate life, and will, in pursuit of that money, batter in the doors of their fellow-men, sell them up, sweat them in fetid dens, stab, hang, imprison, sink, burn, and destroy them in the name of law and order. And this shows their fundamental sanity and right-mindedness, for a sufficient income is indispensable to the practise of virtue, and the man who will let an unselfish consideration stand between him and its attainment is a weakling, a dupe, and a predestined slave. If I could convince our impecunious mob of this, the world would be reformed before the end of the week."

It is rather "breath-bereaving" to discover, after this wholesale exhortation to commit all the crimes possible, that Jesus is now applauded for recommending "that money should cease to be a treasure, and that one should take steps to make ourselves utterly reckless of it." The complete anti-climax, however, is achieved when we are all denounced as "commercialized cads.....doing every-

thing and anything for money." In spite of his intentions, Shaw agrees neither with Jesus nor, always, with himself.

Shaw believes in an absolute economic equality of income after every one has abstracted what he or she needs from the pool. Jesus, on the other hand, accepted without protest the claims of a Cæsar, and nowhere preaches equality of property or income for all mankind. Shaw also believes in equality of morality, for he says: "A man who is better than his fellows is a nuisance." It is useless attempting to realize the teachings of Jesus by "independent explosions of personal righteousness." If this is so, the fundamental assumption of Jesus's whole ethical code was a ghastly blunder, for assuredly this was his most ingrained conviction. On this point the basic position of Shaw and that of Jesus are in hopeless antagonism.

The third doctrine which Shaw attributes to Jesus says:—

Get rid of judges and punishment and revenge.  
Love your neighbour as yourself, he being a part of yourself. And love your enemies: they are your neighbours.

Shaw's injunction to rob, stab, kill, burn, sweat, and imprison those neighbours in order to get money for oneself scarcely fits in with the present injunction to love them.

If Jesus had no use for earthly judges, that did not dispense with judgment of evil. His teaching on who will judge the world, God or himself, is contradictory and confused; but he always insisted that one of them would act as judge, and punishment was undoubtedly to be meted out upon those who failed to keep his commandments, if not in this life, then certainly in another. Even the idea of revenge is not absent, for on occasion

he promises to intercede for those who keep his commands and to deny those who deny him. If he did oppose earthly punishment for crime, and preach non-resistance in respect to evil and forgiveness for the evil-doer whilst on earth, it was because another Judge would attend to the score, "for vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay." Even Shaw recognizes later in the Preface that to vouchsafe too easy forgiveness of sins is to encourage their committal.<sup>1</sup>

The belief in hell or some supernatural punishment is essential as a check upon the evil-doer if earthly punishments are to be abandoned. Whereas Jesus dispensed with earthly punishments and judges and left the account to be settled hereafter, Shaw is apparently prepared to abolish both heavenly and earthly punishments, leaving the matter to the conscience. Mr. Shaw claims that "in dealing with crime and the family modern thought and experience have thrown no fresh light on the views of Jesus." Now, if the views of Jesus were as Shaw asserts—that the criminal should not be judged but loved and pardoned without punishment, then the statement is the sheerest nonsense, which even Shaw himself is partly obliged to disown. Although he suggests we should abolish judges, gallows, and prisons, and be content to label the criminal and leave him to his conscience, or where he lacks enough self-control to be allowed at large we should put him in the lethal-chamber, he does not tell us what he means by a label, nor what is the practical difference between a lethal-chamber and a gibbet. Who will decide as to who shall be merely labelled and who shall be asphyxiated? Obviously the answer is a judge or judges, whether these be the medical experts whom

<sup>1</sup> "The 'saved' thief experiences an ecstatic happiness which can never come to the honest atheist: he is tempted to steal again to repeat the glorious sensation" (p. civ).

Shaw despises or those sitting in the courts or other places where the evidence is heard. Even if the matter is left to the electorate to affix the label, or to provide the ticket for the lethal-chamber, the judges are still there.

We are referred to other writings to make clear Shaw's views on crime. In the Preface to *Major Barbara*, where the subject is again dealt with, no new light is flashed on the question. The thief, ruffian, gambler, and beggar must be handed over to the law and made to understand that the State, which is too humane to punish, is also too thrifty to waste the time of policemen and warders in restraining or punishing dishonest men. (The inclusion of the beggars among the dishonest men is rather peculiar in view of the attitude of Jesus, who said, "Give to him that asks, and from him that would borrow turn thou not away.")

"If there is to be no punishment, there can be no forgiveness," is a Shavian maxim,<sup>1</sup> yet we are asked to applaud the views of Jesus, who did not believe in earthly punishment (which Shaw is here talking about), yet who not only bade us forgive our enemies, but invited us even to love them.

Shaw says we must not punish, but put up with men's vices as we do with their illnesses, until they are more bother than they are worth, at which point we should kill them.

Now, irrespective of what we think of the idea, we can certainly say that it did not receive any support from

<sup>1</sup> In the Preface to *Major Barbara* (p. 171) we are told that "forgiveness, absolution, atonement, are figments. punishment is only a pretence of cancelling one crime by another; and you can no more have forgiveness without vindictiveness than you can have a cure without a disease. You will never get high morality from people who conceive that their misdeeds are revocable and pardonable, or in a society where absolution and expiation are officially provided for us all."



Jesus, and we can but smile at the suggestion that we should applaud the resemblances between Shaw's views and his. Jesus might have asked us to tolerate men's vices without interference, but he did not advocate putting the vicious to death. This is apparently Shaw's notion of loving your enemy !

The practical obstacles in the way of permitting men to do precisely as they please in the way of crime, until we decide killing them is obligatory, are insurmountable. Men may commit many thefts, etc., before death would be agreed to in the present state of public opinion, and the very intricate matter of deciding just precisely when a man was of less value alive than dead would necessitate a legion of trained judges—who, however, are not to be employed. If we confine criminals in asylums as we do lunatics (which Shaw sometimes advises), we rob them of their liberty—which is denounced as a crime—and we restrain their anti-social acts and keep honest men attending to their wants, all of which is condemned by our author as unsound. Shaw's notion finally considered is not endorsed by Jesus, is not practical, and is not supported by advanced opinion.

Advanced penology objects to punitive punishment, and says punishment should be deterrent and reformatory. The more extreme section advocates its abolition entirely ; not only are prisons assailed, but also, and especially, punishment by death. The sanctity of human life is proclaimed to be inviolate under any circumstances, and to call it, not punishment, but social defence, would not justify Shaw's lethal-chamber in their eyes. A good case could certainly be put up for the death sentence with regard to habitual crime of a serious nature. For death is less cruel and costly than lengthy terms of penal servitude. Prisons of some kind, however, are necessary for minor criminals, and even if these are

called asylums honest men's time will still be wasted in attendance on those less worthy. Indeed, the abolition of prisons while the death sentence is retained would throw us back to the days when capital punishment was the penalty for minor offences. Society must have some defence against the aggressor, and if prisons and corporal punishment are to be abolished altogether the lethal-chamber would be much in evidence.

Jesus preached that we must "resist not evil," and trust to the fear of God to keep the wicked in order. Shaw would dispense with both theological and secular judges, much as the latter are needed to enforce social censure, the fear of which is often a deterrent in the minds of evil-doers.

Immunity from repression during probably years of crime, with only a label as punishment, followed by sudden death, is scarcely the teaching of Jesus or the teaching of sense.

Again, when Jesus said, "If a man strike thee on one cheek turn to him the other," he must have had in mind not only the hooligan who batters you and steals your watch, but the one in uniform who bombs you and steals your country. Mr. Shaw, however he may pretend to applaud the teachings of Jesus, is not a conspicuous example of consistency in their application. When smitten in argument he may give plenty of cheek to his opponents, but he never passively turns it to receive another slap! At the outbreak of the World War, when Belgium was invaded, Shaw's contention was not that Germany must be forgiven, but that Germany must be hammered until she mended her ways. He wrote a recruiting play, and loaned money to the Government to help to carry on the War. Before and during the War he even argued that England should not have waited for Belgium to be invaded before announcing her intentions ;

our statesmen should have warned both Germany and France that we should declare war on the nation that struck the first blow. That would, he thought, have prevented hostilities at the outset. In effect, then, Shaw believes not in turning the cheek or in loving the smiter, but in threatening to blow him to blazes even before the blow is struck. In the Epilogue to *Androcles and the Lion* he expresses approval of a Pauline convert who, being an honest man, avows that when the trumpet sounds he cannot follow Jesus. Shaw's Ferrovius does not forgive his enemies or turn his cheek, but picks up a sword and wipes them out. Shaw assails the clergy who turned their churches into recruiting stations in the name of Christ when actually they believed in Mars. Instead they should have taken off their black coats and said: "I find in the hour of trial that the Sermon on the Mount is tosh, and that I am not a Christian. I apologize for all the unpatriotic nonsense I have been preaching all these years. Have the goodness to give me a revolver and a commission in a regiment which has for its chaplain the God Mars: my God."

As Shaw justified the declaration of war and himself went recruiting, this being the policy of Mars and not of Jesus, how can he contend, as he does in the third point of his summary, that he and Jesus are in agreement on this question?

Get rid of your family entanglements. Every mother you meet is as much your mother as the woman who bore you. Every man you meet is as much your brother as the man she bore after you. Don't waste your time at family funerals grieving for your relatives; attend to life, not to death; there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and better. In the kingdom of heaven, which, as aforesaid, is within you, there is no marriage nor giving in marriage, because you cannot devote your

life to two divinities : God and the person you are married to.

The fourth doctrine is thus interpreted by Shaw as an attack on monogamic marriage and family relationships as understood to-day.

Although Jesus was somewhat cavalier in his treatment of his mother and brethren, he could not have meant that one's own mother should receive no special favour at the hands of her son. Shaw's statement implies that one is either to regard one's mother with the same indifference as that applied to millions of other mothers in the world, or that all these mothers are to be loved as we love our own. In the first case, the act would be distinctly harsh and ungrateful; in the second, it is an impossibility. The command to honour thy father and thy mother in the one case, and the axiom that blood is thicker than water in the other, show the God of Jesus opposed to the first and nature opposed to the second application of Shaw's tenet. Surely it cannot be said that it is a waste of time to grieve at the funeral of relatives, unless we feel the same indifference with regard to their death as we do in the case of that of a stranger. If this indifference is to be exalted as an ideal, it means that Shaw believes in the harsher interpretation of our attitude towards our living mother.

There is no marriage in the kingdom of heaven which is within. But the heaven Jesus was thinking of when that statement was made could not have applied to a mere state of mind within a person. If the kingdom of heaven is a state of spiritual exaltation which makes marriage impossible, there is an end to the reproduction of the race. If one believes that this world is to be succeeded by a state where human reproductivity is unnecessary, marriage can be logically condemned. But Shaw believes in neither of these suppositions, though

Jesus believed in both of them. The very words are used in answer to a question as to whose wife a woman will be after the resurrection in the event of her marrying a number of husbands on earth. Jesus says: "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Shaw's claim of Jesus as an ally for his own attack on marriage is based, therefore, on a complete error.

Shaw grumbles at marriage because a married man will do anything for money. But if money is the mighty power Shaw says it is, this should be no objection. The opposition of Jesus, Shaw explains, was due to his recognition that marriage and family ties prevent a man from devoting himself to the higher life. Both Jesus and his disciples, says Shaw, were without family entanglements, for "he found family ties and domestic affections in his way at every turn, and had become persuaded at last that no man could follow his inner light until he was free from their compulsion." This, contends Shaw, justifies the revolt of Jesus against the institution. Yet a little later we discover from Shaw that "the following of the inner light at all costs is largely self-indulgence." Even if one challenges this and argues that abstention from marriage in order to follow the inner light is rather self-denial, we are informed that self-denial "is not a virtue at all."

Marriage is incompatible with both the adventurous and the contemplative life, and finally we have to admit that "the practical solution is to make the individual economically independent of marriage and family, and to make marriage as easily dissoluble as any other partnership." Divorce at will as a deduction from the teaching of Jesus is certainly an interesting discovery, even for Shaw. The position of Jesus was actually the very opposite. In answer to the question, "Is it lawful for a man to put

away his wife for every cause?" he replied: "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder.....Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." In Luke even the justification of fornication is not admitted. Divorce on the ground of incompatibility is regarded by Shaw as far more justifiable than on that of fornication, which indeed to him is a very trivial reason. What to Jesus is adultery is to Shaw sound sense.

But Shaw is actually with Paul as much as with Jesus in this question of sexual relations, however much he tries to disown it. Although condemning Paul's horror of sex as a state of sin, Shaw admits that the shame felt by Adam and Eve about their sexual relations has persisted to this day as one of the strongest of our instincts.<sup>1</sup> And elsewhere Shaw assails marriage because it combines the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity. It encourages lascivious habits. How far divorce at will would remove this drawback we will not discuss. Whether the removal of all economic responsibility from the father and mother of an illegitimate child, whose upkeep could always be ensured by a demand made on the common pool of the State, would give more or less work for the sense of shame which is the accompaniment of sex expression, we will also leave to the reader.

No punishment for the bad either on earth or in hell, no economic reward for the good on earth or in heaven, is the final outcome of Shaw's views on crime and industry. Both deterrents for the bad and incentives for the good are to be abolished. Men are expected to do

<sup>1</sup> Shaw, of course, is here merely assuming the existence of Adam and Eve for the sake of argument.

their best in a world from which penalties for laziness and evil, and rewards for both industry and goodness, have been eradicated by law. This is to be the rule for our present humanity, not for a race of angels which alone could be expected to do its best without hope of reward or fear of pain. If humanity is one-tenth as feeble as Shaw's plays imply; if professional men are so venal as portrayed in *The Doctor's Dilemma*; if our chosen statesmen are so vain as they are depicted in *The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas*; and if the rest of us are the dupes and social dastards Shaw has been pillorying for forty years, then what hope is there for us to achieve decency of conduct without the incentives that have operated since human civilization began? If man is swayed by his greeds and his fears so powerfully as Shaw's plays depict, and the social spirit is so weak, how shall we survive in a state where the best shall receive no reward and the worst no punishment?

To-day, Shaw tells us, "all the old restrictions, which represented honour, religion, patriotism, have been got rid of as intolerable restrictions," until "all become ingrained and supersaturated cads from one end of society to the other." Again, most of us have no religion, and "people who have no religion are cowards and cads." We are mostly without sense of honour; "we are a very poor lot"; we are "worms." Many of our leading scientists are denounced as "dolts, blackguards, impostors, quacks, liars, and, worst of all, credulous, conscientious fools." All these indictments and many more from Shaw, speaking in the first person, are seriously offered as statements of human nature as operative to-day. Yet this gang of dishonourable cowards, cads, impostors, quacks, and worms is to be entrusted with an economic regime and a penal code which would require each citizen to be an angel for it to endure a month. And this is practical politics!

Acts of Parliament, according to Shaw, are to evolve goodness out of cowards and cads, for goodness can come by no other way. Yet every play Shaw has written in which a man has ceased to be "a coward and a cad" gives the lie to the contention. Was it an Act of Parliament which inspired the horse-thief, Blanco Posnet, to play the Great Game? He called it an act of God! Was it an Act of Parliament which achieved Captain Brassbound's conversion; that touched the soul of Bill Walker; that inspired Dick Dudgeon to cease from being the 'Devil's Disciple, Ferrovius to refuse to purchase his life by the sacrifice of his convictions, or Shaw's Christian martyrs in *Androcles and the Lion* to die with a smile? I think not. And Shaw thinks not. If Acts of Parliament alone are to make men good, why does "civilization need a religion as a matter of life and death"?<sup>1</sup> Will an Act of Parliament give men a religion? If "in truth mankind cannot be saved from without," and the revival of civilization is impossible until statesmen "can appeal to the vital instincts of the people in terms of a common religion," what becomes of the Parliamentary panacea for cowardice and caddishness?

Apparently more people are confused than those Bernard Shaw is so fond of scourging.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Back to Methuselah*.



## CHAPTER V

### THE DRAWBACKS OF PAULINE SALVATIONISM

ALTHOUGH, for good or bad reasons, Bernard Shaw applauds what he considers to be the practical doctrines of Jesus, he not only rejects his supernatural views as delusions, but he even more fiercely repudiates those of all his leading "followers," from Paul to General Booth. The doctrines of Salvationism accepted since the time of Paul are to Shaw a ghastly travesty of the true Christianity found in the Gospels. Christianity was slain "suddenly and utterly," "for Jesus was scarcely dead before the apostles dragged the tradition of him down to the level of the thing it has remained ever since." The apostles used their miraculous powers in a malevolent fashion, striking people blind or dead without remorse, and preaching doctrines without one ray of life. Forgetting Jesus and going back to John the Baptist, they preached the remission of sins by repentance and baptism, and threatened hell for those who refused to join their sect.

The "conversion" of Paul completed the catastrophe. Paul was not converted; being under the tyranny of two delirious terrors—the terrors of sin, or sex, and of death—he made a religion of his terrors, and, using the impetus of the movement founded by Jesus, converted it into a Church of his own. The old Salvationism attacked by Jesus was reconstructed by Paul into a fantastic and amazing theology. Sex was felt by Paul as the impulse of sin. "The original sin was not the eating of the forbidden fruit, but the consciousness of sin which the fruit produced." This sense of sin consequent upon the

physical expression or obsession of sex was exploited by Paul, who, himself able to resist its demands, was contemptuous of the weakness of other men who could not, advising them that they had better marry than burn. Recognizing that marriage may lead to husband and wife trying to please each other instead of trying to please God, he still saw that pre-occupation with unsatisfied desire was even more ungodly than pre-occupation with domestic affection. This view led to his conception of a wife as a sexual safety valve, a slave rather than a partner. Paul thus becomes for ever the enemy of woman.

Sex conceived as a sin, with belief in the sacrifice on the cross as essential to avoid damnation, was substituted by Paul for the religion of Jesus. Salvationism displaced Christianity, for, says Shaw, "there is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus."

Paul discarded man as he is, and substituted Adam as the natural man who placed upon posterity the burden of original sin. Damnation was to be avoided by faith in the redemption made possible by the sacrifice of the cross, and what Shaw refers to elsewhere as Crosstianity became an established creed. Instead of Christ's "sin no more," Paul's injunction, practically translated, became: "Sin as much as you like: you can put it all on Christ." Belief and repentance, in spite of a belated re-introduction of good conduct as a test of belief, was accepted as the passport to heaven, rather than a regard for the essential goodness of moral behaviour. To this day, says Shaw, Pauline Christianity is a premium on sin. Its success is partly achieved by its spurious association with the personal charm of Jesus, but its enchantment appeals only to untrained minds.

In comparison with Jesus, Paul was common and conceited. He adopted the method of the vulgar

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revivalist, dwelling with zest on his past misdeeds, and stressing the wrath to come for those who refused to be saved.

This method of working an audience up to hysteria aims at a purely nervous effect, by allowing a man to become intoxicated with his own vanity, which is mistaken for the presence of the Holy Ghost. The evil consequences of the apostles' preaching are seen in later years, when their successors indulge in the abominable amusement of terrifying children with threats of hell. All this, says Shaw, is foreign to the spirit of Jesus. The result is that not even the opponents of Jesus ever detest him, or feel glad when they read of his sufferings; while "nobody has ever cared twopence about the martyrdom of Peter." When Jesus called Peter to be his disciple, an honest fisherman was spoiled to be turned into a mere salvation-monger!

Early in its history apostolic Christianity got entangled in a dispute as to whether salvation was to be achieved by the sprinkling of water or by a surgical operation. A little later another controversy occurred about whether the effect of eating the God led to a "symbolic or a real ingestion of divine substance." The disputes about these rites, upon which Jesus would not have wasted twenty words, led to slaughter, hatred, and persecution on a monstrous scale.

The Trinity and the Virgin Birth added fuel to the embers of hate, and Arian and Nestorian schisms provided rancour and wars. In the eighth century "Charlemagne made Christianity compulsory by killing those who refused to embrace it," and from his time onward "the history of Christian controversy reeks with blood and fire, torture and warfare."

Shaw then proceeds to discuss the perils of Salvationism. To encourage a man to believe that, no matter

how deeply he sins, he can by an act of repentance be made pure "is to encourage him to be a rascal."

The idea that one can place all the responsibility for wicked acts upon Christ, while humiliating to an honourable man, is eagerly embraced by a man without honour. When hell is preached, the fact of a post-mortem punishment awaiting the backslider may have the effect of keeping him up to his vows of repentance; but, as hell is now rejected by all the leaders of thought, the doctrine of the Atonement practically gives a blank cheque for sin. The saved thief feels an ecstatic joy, and concludes that his sins have been forgiven; but an upright man, shouldering his own responsibilities for his actions, will be careful what deeds he commits, knowing that an implacable conscience cannot be bribed by the credulous acceptance of a vicarious atonement.

To understand the full force of Shaw's repudiation of the anti-Christian Salvationist doctrine introduced by Paul, and accepted by the Churches, we must consider the Preface to *Major Barbara*. Here we find material poverty indicted as the supreme sin, to which all others are trivial in comparison. Poverty must be regarded as a contagious disease, like small-pox, blighting not only the immediate victim, but all society. It is questionable whether a poor man would not do ten times less harm as a murderer or as a prosperous burglar.

Money is essential to salvation. To teach children to despise money is wicked. The first duty of every man is to get money at all costs. Thanks to our cowardice and political imbecility, both caused by poverty, all sensible people quite rightly strain every nerve and every canon of morality to get an independent income. But when attained, some of them find that the presence of poverty in others taints the very social atmosphere with the miasma of ignorance and vulgarity. Therefore, men like

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Morris and Ruskin preached revolt to the poor, only to find the poor indifferent to their artistic ideals, and desiring to wallow in costly vulgarities, from which the refined rich turn away in loathing.

It is by surfeit, says Shaw, that the poor will be cured of such unwholesome desires. The poor, meanwhile, cravenly submit to every indignity and oppression, while "Christianity, in making a merit of such submission, has marked only that depth in the abyss in which the very sense of shame is lost."

The Salvation Army is then considered. Filled with the fire and joy of religious enthusiasm, it invades the slums, calling sinners to repentance. But money is needed to carry on the work, and a bureaucracy of business men is in process of evolution that will be worse than that of the bishops. The Army accepts the cash of the rich sweaters and exploiters, who would cut off supplies if it preached rebellion to the exploited. The Army is hopelessly out of date in its theology, still sticking to Genesis and the other myths of the Bible, and preaching hell-fire for the wicked, with an eternity of bliss "that would bore any active person to a second death" for the blessed. With a bad habit of talking as if its members were heroically enduring a miserable time on earth, when the fact is they are riotously happy, heaven is pictured not so much as being a place of joy for humanity as a whole, but rather as a special corner reserved for Salvationists in particular. A man is not really saved, says Shaw, until he is ready to die cheerfully, giving back to life more than he took from it, and content that his eternal life shall be absorbed into that of humanity, rather than wishing to carry on for ever in a separate existence.

"Then there is the lying habit called confession," encouraged far too much by the Salvation Army,

Converts find favour by reciting their deeds of violence, not unnaturally drawing upon their imaginations when they discover that the worse their previous lives have been the more elated are the Salvationists at the implied eulogy of their powers of rescue; the greater the sinner, the greater the triumph of his saviours. The result is that the Army is taken in by confessions, because in its anxiety for conversions it wants to be taken in. The central error of "all propagandists of the Cross, to which I object, as I object to all gibbets," is their belief that forgiveness, absolution, and atonement can wipe out misdeeds. If we pardon or punish a sin, the sinner gets the feeling that he may erase the memory from his conscience. To feel that Christ has paid the penalty, or that imprisonment has wiped out the debt, leaves a man's conscience free to sin again, when what is required is that one shall lose the desire to sin. The reminder of unexpiated remorse, and the knowledge that evil deeds cannot be compounded either by the atonement of Christ or by the punishment endured by oneself, must alone be the means of salvation.

The central truth of Christianity is the vanity of punishment and revenge, and its central superstition is the belief in the salvation of the world by the gibbet.

The Salvation Army, like all other religious organizations, is itself in urgent need of salvation, for it fails to recognize that poverty is "a most damnable sin." The large endowments it receives from the rich are endowments of docility and contentment, used to soothe the poor into acquiescence with their lot and to stave off revolt. Religious bodies in general are in league with the police and the military, as almoners of the rich taking off the insurrectionary edge of poverty with charity and doping the victims with hopes of immense happiness in another world after they have been worked

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to a premature death in this. Accordingly, neither the Salvation Army nor the Church will ever win the complete confidence of the poor, in league as they are with those who wish to maintain the dishonest laws of property and the other abominations of the existing order.

The slave morality of Crosstianity is used by missionaries to reconcile the black races in Africa to their subjugation by white capitalists, and in our Church schools to justify exploitation by the rich in England. It draws the teeth of the poor and oppressed, and after the death of Jesus the Apostles made the tribute to Cæsar incident an excuse "for carrying subservience to the State to a pitch of idolatry," until men were obliged to cut off the heads of kings to restore some sense of proportion.

Shaw's general indictment of the resulting society is as follows:—

Our liberties destroy all freedom; our property is organized robbery, our morality is an impudent hypocrisy; our wisdom is administered by inexperienced and malexperienced dupes, our power wielded by cowards and weaklings, and our honour false at all points.

Thus the religion of Jesus, contends Shaw, was displaced in every aspect by the Crosstianity of Paul and the Apostles, until Luther "concentrated Salvationism to a point at which the most execrable murderer who believes in it when the rope is round his neck flies straight to the arms of Jesus, whilst Tom Paine and Shelley fall into the bottomless pit to burn there for all eternity."

However the modern Churches try to purge themselves of Salvationism, we are still without a single established religion that will stand examination. Creeds must be intellectually honest and adapted to the present

needs of evolving societies. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England or the assumptions of the Westminster Confession "are wildly impossible as political constitutions for modern empires."

Yet "government is impossible without a religion; that is, without a body of common assumptions." Although no educated student can overlook the discrepancies and absurdities in the Bible—for example, "the three different accounts of creation jumbled together in the book of Genesis"—it is possible to find some light by synthesizing the reasonable elements in the records of Jesus and rejecting the rest.



## CHAPTER VI

### PAUL v. JESUS

IN this Chapter we will consider the foregoing views of the relations of Pauline Christianity to those of Jesus, noticing some characteristic exaggerations and contradictions in Bernard Shaw's own position.

In the Preface to *Major Barbara* we are told that the Peter Shirleys (representing the exploited poor) have not the slightest intention of organizing society so as to put an end to their degradation. The virtuous indignation, caustic criticism, and conclusive arguments of reformers have had no effect, and all the pamphleteering of Mr. Shaw himself has been wasted and would have remained useless if it had been ten times as powerful.

The problem, says Shaw, is how to make heroes out of cowards. This cowardice and political imbecility, it will be remembered, were caused by poverty, and we also previously learned that Acts of Parliament can make men good. If cowardice and imbecility are caused by poverty, why are the rich not free from these vices? That they are not is shown by the admission that "our wisdom is administered by.....dupes," and "our power wielded by cowards and weaklings."

Again, Mr. Shaw very heatedly asserts that mankind is a single species in respect to moral worth, and not divided into villains and heroes, cowards and dare-devils, according to income and caste. They are not; but if imbecility and cowardice were produced by poverty instead of by character, they would be.

If poverty is the supreme vice and possession of money the supreme virtue, all the poor would be wasters and all the rich would be saints.

Shaw's only remedy for the tendency of the poor to wallow in insensate gluttonies and vulgarities, when they get the chance, is to cure them by a surfeit. If it is the cure, why is it possible for the rich to set this bad example to the poor? They have had a chance of being surfeited for many years, and yet, *vide* Mr. Shaw, they are as bad as or worse than ever. More especially should all vicious habits have been eradicated from the rich, when we discover in addition that money destroys the vicious just as it uplifts the virtuous. All vice, on this argument, should long ago have been abolished among the habitually rich.

Mr. Shaw draws a terrible picture of the effects of punishment when applied to the criminal. He demonstrates how much more reformatory is the method of kindness both on rich and poor. By refusing to punish the hooligan Bill Walker, in his play, Major Barbara brings home a conviction of sin when the threats of Rummy Mitchens merely inflame the ruffian in Bill's character. Also, our commercial millionaires, who "begin as brigands: merciless, unscrupulous, dealing out ruin and death and slavery to their competitors and employees," outdoing in villainy the worst buccaneer of the Spanish Main, become angelic under the Christian treatment of society. Good is returned for evil; they are respected and idolized until they begin to idolize themselves by living up to the treatment they receive. Our angel then writes books and preaches sermons all filled with edifying advice, endows educational institutes, "supports charities, and dies in the odour of sanctity, leaving a will which is a monument of public spirit." But reverse your attitude towards him, lay hands on his

property, revile or assault him, and he reverts to the brigand, "as ready to crush you as you are to crush him."

Yet, in spite of this conclusive demonstration of the danger of abuse and attacks upon the rich man's property, Shaw outdoes any street-corner tub-thumper in a red tie by the violence of the vituperation he pours upon these "commercialized cads" who are devoid of honour, wisdom, sincerity, or courage. The public spirit which their riches have stimulated is forgotten in his diatribes. The rich as portrayed by Shaw are just like the poor, are far worse than the poor, and are far better than the poor, according to what he wants to prove. One moment they are applauded for their "fundamental sanity" in getting money at all costs by killing, sweating, or cheating; the next moment they are denounced as unscrupulous cads for the same behaviour.

Attack their property, and these saints become devils. Yet, strangely enough, only by Acts of Parliament, making inroads upon their property to the point of complete confiscation, can bad men be turned into good ones. By attacking their property you make men brigands; yet to attack property just the same is to make men good. Hooligans who batter your head and steal your watch must suffer no harm, for that makes their characters worse. Punishment is cruel. But brigands who have turned into public-spirited benefactors must be attacked by methods which will turn them back into brigands again. That is sound morality!

Successful business men deserve no mercy. But an anarchist who launched a packet of fulminate at a royal couple in Madrid, missing his mark and killing twenty-three people and wounding ninety-nine, is complimented on his "appalling courage and resolution," and the people who demand his punishment are denounced as

bloodthirsty wolves. Murderers, like Cain, must be treated kindly, for, we are told, had Cain been allowed to pay off his score by a saviour or a policeman he might possibly have killed Adam and Eve for the sake of another reconciliation with God. In spite of Cain's exemplary conduct under the Shavian treatment for murderers, we find Shaw's Cain in *Back to Methuselah* glorifying the profession of the homicide, and threatening to kill both his parents, after having achieved many scalps in addition to that of Abel. This contradiction need not distress Shaw. Artists are not expected to be consistent, although the average moralist likes to find a *little* bias in that direction.

Acts of Parliament to make men good will operate on the basis of robbing Peter to pay Paul—a basis emphatically condemned when Peter happens to be a banker; for we learn that "a rational society would esteem the cut-throat more highly than the capitalist." This may constitute a justification. But if one criminal is to be exempt from punishment, surely the same treatment is necessary for the other. Or does Shaw really approve of one law for the rich and another for the poor, in spite of his denunciation of this inequity?

These Acts of Parliament operating in attacks upon property are the only means of making men good, just as poverty is enough to make men bad. Yet, in spite of poverty, and without the transforming agency of politics, we hear from Shaw of poor men joining the Salvation Army, and, presto! "Fear, which we flatter by calling Self, vanishes, and transfigured men and women carry their gospel through a transfigured world." In the Dream Scene of *Man and Superman*, Don Juan says that if you stick an ideal in a man's head he changes from a coward into a hero with no fear of death. Neither an ideal nor a belief in salvation is due to Acts of Parliament.

Again, the Acts of Parliament may not result in goodness even for the poor. For we have been reminded that if money is "thrown in the slums" the only result will be a drunken spree. Shaw does not suggest actually throwing money in the slums, but he does suggest a method equally disastrous. His method is Communism, defined as "Take what you want without payment," as the people do in Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Now, in Morris's book there is no obligation to prove that one has rendered any sort of service before one is allowed to go in a store (in charge of a child) and choose as much as one desires of what one desires. Since, presumably, beer would be available, and admittedly the poor want beer, and a lot of it, drunken sprees would be, in some quarters, the order of the day—and of many succeeding days. The only check upon this is, presumably, the ensuing surfeit; and seeing that the poor, as Shaw admits, do not want refined and uplifting things, but to wallow in vulgar and even debasing sensations, the good done by the Acts of Parliament might not be too conspicuous even among the poor. Shaw here preaches the doctrine of Jesus, "Give to him that asks, and from him that would borrow turn thou not away," no mention being made that service should be obligatory in return.

As we have seen, Jesus is very favourably compared with Paul; but elsewhere Shaw is obliged to admit the maxim of the despised Paul as a check upon giving what is wanted merely for the asking. If we are to provide sustenance, it can be only on the condition that an equivalent is returned in the form of labour; in other words, Paul's maxim, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." If a man refuses to work, is idle and heartless, with no sense of social responsibility, how then shall we prevent his acting as a parasite on the community? Then comes the staggering answer from

this man who has denounced the punishment of the evil-doer as a crime against the criminal: "We may *quite rationally* compel him to abstain from idling by whatever means we employ to compel him to abstain from murder, arson, forgery, or any other crime." This admits the use of punishment for idleness as for other crimes; or, if punishment is abandoned, of labelling the culprit and leaving the matter to his conscience! This is to be the outcome of the Acts of Parliament which are to make men good.

To-day nearly all of us are "commercialized cads," willing only to work for monetary payment, and many of us will spree if the opportunity is provided. Yet this monetary incentive is to be removed, and what we want, and as much as we want, to gratify our appetites is to be provided from the common store without compulsion being used to ensure a return in labour.

Better to pension off the poor as incurables, says Shaw, than allow them to remain as they are, cancers on the communities. But free pensions would increase the cancers rather than reduce them. This is Shaw's position in the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, where he is dealing with the poor; but, perhaps, having in mind the rich in the Preface to *Major Barbara*, he says: "No crumb shall go to any able-bodied adults who are not producing by their personal exertions not only a full equivalent for what they take, but a surplus sufficient to provide for superannuation and to pay back the debt due for their nurture." In one place people are to be fed first *ad lib.* from the common store, and society is apparently to take its chance of getting payment in labour; as compulsion is wrong, no steps can be taken in the way of self-defence—the position of Jesus. But in the other instance not a crumb is to be provided except for services rendered—the position of Paul.

If it be argued that both positions are the same, that Shaw admits the logic of the punishment for crime being applied to the idlers, the reply is: If so, he throws overboard his own position, and, in his own words, commits a crime against the idler. If no punishment is applied, short of stopping the supplies, there we have the poor as cancers as before. Poverty is a crime; compulsion is a crime. How will Shaw get out of this dilemma?

What would, of course, obtain if the idler's supplies were cut off is that the other members of the family would take what they wanted without payment from the common store, and also provide all that was necessary for the loafing relation, who could then continue his life of idleness. Failing relatives, there would always be somebody to practise charity at the community's expense, especially if they believed in giving to him that asked, etc., as Christ enjoined.

I am not here discussing the pros and cons of Communism, as such, but only those contradictions implied in Bernard Shaw's views on this and related subjects.

The next point we may notice is the statement that "Churches are suffered to exist only on condition that they preach submission to the State as at present capitalistically organized." They must be on the side of the police and military, which are the instruments by which the rich rob and oppress the poor. "It is not possible to be on the side of the poor and the police at the same time." Now, Mr. Shaw is a member of the Labour Party, which is to carry out the Acts of Parliament that are to abolish poverty by taxing the rich to uplift the poor. Granted that the Churches have justified submission to capitalistic oppressors in the past, is it true that they would have been abolished had they done otherwise? If so, how does Mr. Shaw explain the present triumph of the Labour Party, which, so far from

defending capitalism, is to be the means of its abolition? Instead of steps being taken to suppress it, the Labour Party, during its period of office, was patted on the back by the daily press, and, indeed, has been in danger of being killed by kindness. Preaching, not submission to capitalism, but rather revolt, the Labour Party, when it was in office, was as much on the side of the police as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the truth being that the police are not the instruments by which the poor are robbed, and most assuredly the Labour Party has not the faintest intention of disbanding them as part of its policy. As for the military, Mr. Shaw believes in their necessity as much as does any General, pacifism not being included in the Shavian programme.

And now let me utter a protest against Shaw's theatrical habit of making Paul the villain and Jesus the hero of the theological melodrama.

One of the chief vices of the Churches has undoubtedly been the inculcation of slave morality—that doctrine of meekness and contentment which has made the oppressed satisfied with a promise of heaven in lieu of justice on earth. Although both Peter and Paul preached the duty of obedience even under oppression, the most thoroughgoing support of slave morality came from Jesus. Non-resistance was enjoined, and blessings poured upon meekness, humility, and poverty of spirit, as if these were the passports to heaven. Not one word came from Jesus in condemnation of slavery. Poverty was applauded and riches were condemned, as if one was virtue and the other vice. Indeed, Dives is sent to hell in the parable for no other fault than his riches, and Lazarus goes to heaven for no other virtue than his poverty; Mr. Shaw's view of the matter being here turned upside down.

Paul is censured for preaching hell, but he did not



introduce this fearful notion into Christian theology. Jesus had blown on the fires of hell pretty vigorously before Paul applied the brimstone ; yet Jesus is excused (" he had a delusion " ), while Paul is censured, although he was a neuropath !

Again, if rows ensued through differences about the Eucharist, it was Jesus who first grafted the notion on his system ; and as for confusion about his doctrines, surely a man who uttered parables purposely obscure, so that " seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven," can hardly be immune from blame in the matter.

The members of the early Church engaged in heated controversy, and fiercely denounced and persecuted their opponents. Jesus surely contributed his share of acrimony. A man who blasts fig-trees without cause, overturns tables, whips money-changers, and denounces opponents as " Ye serpents and generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell ? " is himself scarcely a model to be followed. If enemies were even assaulted and persecuted, he who said, " Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me " ( Luke xix, 27 ), has surely some responsibility in the matter. As for malevolent miracles performed by the Apostles, far more vindictive exhibitions are reported of Jesus in Apocryphal records, once held to be as authoritative as the present Gospels, and in any case quite as credible ( or incredible ).

No, Mr. Shaw, it will not do ! A man who said nothing to forbid slavery and witchcraft ( a belief which led later to thousands of painful deaths ) ; who believed in demoniacal possession ( responsible for the cruel treatment of lunatics in later years ) ; who preached a vengeful

God, with death in this world and hell in the next for his opponents; who wilfully obscured his meaning; who placed repentant harlots before honest priests, and credulous thieves on a cross before sincere sceptics; who denounced his chief friend as Satan for giving him good advice: such a man can scarcely with propriety be cast for a part that needs a perfect character. In any case, Jesus would not have returned the compliment; for by him Bernard Shaw would have been consigned to hell as a blasphemous trifler, together with his lethal-chambers for wasters, his repudiation of forgiveness, his free divorce, his mammon worship, his surfeit as a cure for sin, and his "complicated political machinery" to make men good.

And why should Paul be so soundly castigated by Mr. Shaw as the enemy of woman, and Jesus so much applauded? A man who says to his mother without reason, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" scarcely uplifts the sex. A man who admits he came to sow discord between mother and daughter, and whose scant respect for domestic relationships was carried to the lengths commended by Mr. Shaw, can hardly be looked upon as a worshipper of woman. Nor does it help to make Shaw's pose of favourably contrasting Christ's attitude with Paul's more convincing to find him recording how Jesus "brutally" called a woman a dog in the incident of the woman of Canaan, and how tellingly she rebuked him (Preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, p. xxxiii). Shaw's chief example to demonstrate the inferiority of Paul in the matter of sex does nothing of the kind. I will follow his version.

Paul advised those who could not control their passions to take a wife, for it is better to marry than burn. This implies that a wife is a convenience instead of a helpmeet, merely there for the purpose of removing her

husband's pre-occupation with sex, as she does the need for his pre-occupation with hunger by acting as cook. Paul gave this advice in order to free men's minds for the work of God. In spite of the danger that the married might be more prone to spend their time pleasing each other, he knew that even that were better than undue pre-occupation with unsatisfied sexual appetites.

Jesus, on the other hand, is applauded for his refusal to recognize the claims of sex, and for urging men to scorn their family ties. But Shaw is obliged to admit that celibacy cannot be universal, and must be accepted chiefly by the men with a mission, otherwise holiness is achieved at the cost of human extermination. Where, then, lies the superiority of the position of Jesus?

Paul, as a man with a mission, practised celibacy, and advised those who could without disaster to do the same. The others could marry, and, with their desires satisfied, work for the glory of God. On Paul's basis, both abnormal and normal men could form part of his Church; on the basis of the Shavian Jesus, only abnormal men were of use. By Paul's method, Christians could hand on their good qualities by parentage; by the method of Jesus, reproduction is left to the unsaved.

Another interesting feature of the Shavian dialectic occurs in this connection. To make his interpretation of Jesus credible Shaw has to limit the application of the commands of Jesus, anent the burial of the dead and the repudiation of family responsibilities, to the immediate followers of Christ. The race would cease and the unburied dead would pollute the air if the command were generally acted upon. If that applies to family matters, it applies to property also. Only those who wanted to follow him were advised to sell their possessions and give to the poor: the Cæsars could still retain

their rights of property. Why, then, should advice given only to a few (some of it being, indeed, fatal if applied to the many) be extended in the name of Jesus to the whole universe by Shaw, and by methods which, as in the case of divorce at will, were repudiated by Jesus with scorn as being equivalent to adultery?

It was not Paul but Jesus who said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." It was also Jesus who preached: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters—yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Words like these, together with those of Paul, must be held accountable for the frightful catalogue of horrors recorded by Lecky and by Lea. Parents were reviled and hated by the godly, normal domestic ties were assailed as manacles of the Devil, and incredible lacerations of the flesh were imposed by those who accepted the words of Christ, until insanity itself seemed to take possession of vast masses of the elect.

Paul's neuropathic tendencies are not urged by Shaw in extenuation of his views; but the delusions of Jesus as to his divinity, his views on the Eucharist, his doctrine of hell, his foretelling of the bloodshed and discord he had come to introduce, gave the pretext, more than any words of Paul, for the horrible miseries and slaughter that have saturated the records of Christian sectarianism.

In other particulars Shaw is also in error. He says there are two views of Jesus to be derived from the records; but many more than two views can be obtained from a reading of the New Testament. Indeed, the various sects manage to discover half a hundred; here are five:—

1. There is the view of Jesus mistaking himself for a John Barleycorn god.

2. Jesus as the Christianity god of Paul and the Churches.

3. Jesus as a human sociologist, as conceived by Shaw.

4. Jesus as the supreme ethical preacher of love, forgiveness, humility, and non-resistance, as conceived by the Quakers.

5. Jesus the arrogant, abusive, and intolerant controversialist who wants his enemies killed in this life and roasted in the next, as conceived by the Catholics.

All these, and more, contradictory attitudes of Jesus<sup>1</sup> are portrayed in the New Testament, and no candid and impartial reader who approaches the study free from pre-conceptions can truthfully maintain that anything like a consistent individuality is there depicted. The fact is that Jesus emerges chameleon-like out of the different literary treatments of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, to say nothing of Peter and Paul and Shaw, just as any other character would appear if the chroniclers had had no first-hand contact with him, but based their descriptions upon traditions reduced to writing years after the character had lived. Even orthodox scholars have now given up the pretence of believing that any of the Gospels were written until nearly a century after the events they record.

On every phase of Christ's teaching the Gospels themselves are inharmonious. For example, on the subject of war Jesus advised his disciples to buy swords, yet afterwards condemned their use. This enables the religious world to applaud Jesus the Pacifist in times of peace, and to revert to the teaching of Jesus the pugnacious in times of war. In spite of his censure of the clergy who followed Mars instead of Christ

<sup>1</sup> Shaw admits, in his Preface on "Parents and Children" (1914), that the Bible contains half-a-dozen contradictory religions.

during the recent war, Shaw denies that Jesus was a Pacifist.

Evidently, by Mr. Shaw, the gospel of turning the other cheek is taken to apply only to the criminal smiter living in Britain, and not to the enemy outside. Jesus is permitted to wear the khaki uniform of the soldier, but not the blue uniform of a policeman; "blessed are the peacemakers" notwithstanding!

Shaw has a plan of social salvation which he claims was that of Jesus. Now Jesus actually had no plans for social salvation, but he had two doctrines for the individual. One said salvation was ensured by action; the other said salvation was ensured by belief. "He that believeth on me and is baptised is saved; he that believeth not is damned."

How shall we know whether our belief is strong enough to win salvation? The answers are clear: "These signs shall follow them that believe, In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark xvi, 17-18). Elsewhere other tests are given, such as the removal of mountains and sycamine trees as acts of faith. In John xiv, 12, is written: "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." In fact, "nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. xviii, 20).

Unless Shaw can cast out devils, speak in new tongues, handle snakes, drink poison unharmed, cure the sick, move mountains and trees, he does not believe. Unless he can make the blind see, the deaf hear, the corpse live, and perform even greater miracles, he must not claim Jesus as an ally. Nay, unless he can do the impossible he is damned.

Since no man ever believed so powerfully as to be able to fulfil these tests, Mr. Shaw, with the rest of us, is damned for ever.

But Jesus also preached, as essential to get one into heaven, that "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc., and "thy neighbour as thyself." Also, he said that one should sell what he had and give to the poor. But Bernard Shaw, probably far richer than the man to whom the command was addressed, does not sell what he has and give it to the poor. And he exudes copious reasons demonstrating how impossible is such an operation, and, if possible, how disastrous would be the effects. "If one man sells out and throws the money into the slums, the only result will be to add himself and his dependents to the list of the poor, and to do no good to the poor beyond giving a chance few of them a drunken spree." Exactly! Then why applaud the teaching of the man who gives such unwise advice? Ah, is Shaw's reply, we must make Christianity practicable by "complicated political devices." A lot Jesus cared for complicated political devices! He preached, not politics, but personal righteousness; and, says Shaw, "personal righteousness and the view that you cannot make people moral by Act of Parliament" is the favourite defensive resort of those who are determined not to have their property meddled with by anybody. In which case how can Jesus be consistently hailed as a forerunner of the parliament-made morality of Mr. Shaw?

The practical teaching of Jesus being so disastrous before the complicated political machinery has got to work, and being unnecessary after, of what use is it at all?

Social salvation and personal virtue being possible only by Acts of Parliament, Jesus is scarcely the teacher to whom one should be directed. He certainly had no

faith in man-made laws as a means of salvation. Indeed, he could almost be correctly described as an Anarchist; and Shaw writes pamphlets on "The Impossibility of Anarchism."

Jesus Christ knew little and cared less about State enactments, for, as Lord Hugh Cecil contends :—

It must have struck every attentive reader of the New Testament that its direct teaching in respect to matters of State is slight and even meagre. Neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles do we read much about the State. The duty of obedience to the State is more than once enforced. The separation of spiritual and secular matters is taught in the memorable "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." And throughout an example of patient submission, even to oppression, is prominent. (*Conservatism*, pp. 74-5).

Shaw's position is that social salvation must come before individual righteousness is possible. Jesus said the opposite. Shaw believes in an economic and political revolution as the basis of man's upliftment, yet he admits that Jesus never suggested a sectarian theocracy as a form of government, nor did he consider the overthrow of the Roman Empire as a necessary part of his programme.

Finally, Shaw rejects prayer, which to Jesus was one of the most effective means of improving the world, for "all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi, 22).



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DUALITY OF BERNARD SHAW

IF a good, full-face portrait of Bernard Shaw is studied, it will be noticed that the two sides of the face are dissimilar in appearance. Many people have uneven faces, but Shaw's is rather remarkable in this respect, one side being gravely respectable, the other being blessed with a Mephistophelian impishness, both together expressing the two aspects of his temperament.

Just as gravity and levity are represented in his physiognomy, so another duality may be observed in his writings, examples of which have already been noted in the previous pages. It is difficult to find two words which adequately describe this duality in Mr. Shaw. One aspect may be called egoistic, individualistic, Epicurean, instinctive, or anarchistic, stressing rights; the other could be described as altruistic, communistic, Stoical, intellectual, or constitutional, stressing duties. The aspects concerned with rights could be sub-divided into personal and social rights: those demanded to satisfy the self-regarding requirements of Mr. Shaw, and those demanded to satisfy the needs of the society in which he lives.

Having these diverse elements in his nature, and being in the habit of very definitely voicing the claims of any of his instincts or ideas, the result is the somewhat confusing medley of opinions which is scattered throughout his works.

I have been obliged to draw attention to some of his numerous contradictory statements, and I must now

attempt to reconcile or explain them. Many of the contradictions in Shaw's philosophy are merely verbal, being due to his desire to administer a shock, leading in consequence to a bad habit of exaggeration, which is partly deliberate and partly unconscious. But there is also an important hiatus in his general thought that leads of necessity to many minor ones.

To hear a man preaching virtue and self-sacrifice in public, and to find him practising vice and selfishness in private, is no uncommon experience. Almost as common is it to find men supporting two opposite codes of conduct, one on weekdays and the other on Sundays—one for business and one for religion. Men who have won riches by dubious exploitation or speculation will many times be ashamed of these transactions, and will not infrequently display a lavish public beneficence to salve their own conscience and that of society. Their private gratification meanwhile will be kept, through shame, as far as possible from the public gaze.

Mr. Shaw, on the other hand, is proud of his egotisms; will shout from the housetops the necessity for gratifying his appetites and passions, and his profound reverence for money. He makes huge demands for the satisfaction of personal needs, but, unlike many men, does not enjoin contentment upon others. He is no more ashamed of his instincts than he is of his intellect. He will, without scruple, demand a high fee for an article and bully the editor who pays less than he asks. With a number of other authors Shaw was once requested to permit the republication of a selection from his writings. When he found that his colleagues had violated the trade-unionism of letters by omitting to charge a fee as a condition of the inclusion of his selection, he promptly demanded a particularly high royalty for himself to cover their share and his own.

Yet this "Shylock" will deliver hundreds of lectures on Socialism, for which thousands of pounds might be obtained, without charging one penny of a fee. He will write pamphlets and essays, most of which are widely circulated, for the mere love of the cause. Nor does he mind foregoing a hundred pounds for the sake of a joke. He once received an unexpected cheque for five hundred dollars from the editor of an American magazine, together with the information that this represented the amount of an annual prize offered for the best contribution accepted during the year, Mr. Shaw on this occasion being the winner. Shaw returned the cheque, and, with real or assumed indignation, announced that he never entered into competitions, adding with characteristic mock-conceit: "It would not be fair to the other competitors." The editor rose to the occasion by apologizing to Mr. Shaw, and explaining that the duties of literary judge had, owing to an oversight, been discharged for that year by the office-boy; hence the reason for Mr. Shaw coming out on top. The boy had been accordingly shot, and the cheque presented to his widowed mother!

Unfortunately, the two aspects of Shaw's teaching, which urge the necessity of personal selfishness on the one hand and preach the duty of complete self-abnegation on the other, do not occur sequentially, but concurrently. If Mr. Shaw at one time in his career had preached selfishness and railed at duty, and had later become converted to opposite views of life, writing consistently as he felt during the two periods, he would be both easier to explain and easier to understand. But, then, he would not be Bernard Shaw!

We find him many years ago, in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, repudiating duty to both God and man. We find him later, in the Preface to *The Irrational Knot*, justifying the sweating, burning, and stabbing of one's

neighbours in the interests of that sufficient income which is to him so indispensable to the practice of virtue, unselfish qualms being stigmatized as the reflexes of weakness, folly, and slavery. "Conscience," we are told, "is a luxury, and should be indulged only when the vital needs of life have been abundantly satisfied." In *Major Barbara* and the Preface to *Androcles and the Lion* money is enthroned, and the same lesson is driven home.

We read in various works of the necessity for instinctive expression uncurbed by social codes—justifications apparently for all kinds of libertinism. Early in life he appears to have picked up and adopted a phrase from the mystic poet, William Blake. "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," for, adds Shaw, "you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough." In respect to conduct, he seems to endorse the Scriptural injunction to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good, claiming that personal experience is necessary before this can be effective. "Do what you want to do; duty is a tyrant," sums up this phase of his teaching. The belief previously noticed, that surfeit alone will cure the poor from hankering after unwholesome things, is in line with this morality (or immorality).

Now, there persists all through Shaw's writings a stressing of what might be called anarchy in morals. A demand for freedom of instinctive expression in respect to the habits of criminals, women, and especially of children, is constantly voiced. Repression in the name of law, morality, or parental authority is vigorously denounced, and the rights of the individual are as excessively stressed. Whether there was a distinct period in the life of Bernard Shaw when the philosophy of political Anarchism was completely accepted seems

doubtful.<sup>1</sup> If there was, he soon abandoned it, for we find him demonstrating the *Impossibilities of Anarchism* in an early pamphlet under that title. But *ethical Anarchism* is found in the later works as in the earlier.

He soon recognized that the Anarchist policy of no interference from the State was in many respects identical with that of their bitterest opponents, the Manchester School, who preached the policy of *laissez-faire*; and he admits that a Fabian Government when in power will back up its authority with force, precisely as capitalist governments have done.

But he preaches the abolition of repressive authority in connection with criminals, women, and children to this day, however much he adds, in recent years, that we all need moralizing by other discipline than that of individual excess. In this connection Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his book on Bernard Shaw, writes: "He begins to play with the Herbert Spencer idea of teaching children by experience; perhaps the most fatuously silly idea that was ever put down in print." He then asks how it would be applied to falling over a precipice.<sup>2</sup>

It will be more convenient, in describing the evolution of Shaw's beliefs from a repudiation of duty, idealism, self-denial, temperance, reason, and the other conventions, to an insistence upon these very qualities more fierce than that of any Puritan, to treat them historically,

<sup>1</sup> There was a semi-Anarchistic period in the early history of the Fabian Society, and Shaw at first leaned to the Anarchists, even speaking on their platform in support.

<sup>2</sup> However telling is this question when applied to Shaw, it misses the mark when applied to Spencer, who, in his work on *Education*, deals with the very point, showing that under some circumstances restrictive measures would be necessary. "A three-year-old urchin playing with an open razor cannot be allowed to learn by this discipline of consequences." Again, he says: "Of course, in those occasional hazards, where there is a risk of broken limbs or other serious injuries, forcible prevention is called for."

remembering, however, that Shaw's philosophy has always embraced this queer mixture.

In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, first published in 1891, when Shaw was aged thirty-five, we find what might be called his doctrine of indulgence set very strongly in opposition to the doctrine of abstinence. Will is set against reason, rights against duties, honesty against idealism. There is much wayward thinking mixed up with a deal of sound sense. Some of the dicta are completely silly, while others are silly only when isolated from the context. As an example of the former is the statement on page 11 about "there being just as good reasons for burning a heretic at the stake as for rescuing a shipwrecked crew from drowning; in fact, there are better." As an example of the latter we have: "Progress must involve the repudiation of an established duty at every step." The reasoning behind the last statement is as follows: Duty is first conceived as a tyrant evoked out of man's fear of the unknown. All he fears is personified as a God of wrath, and the duty of slavishly placating him is fiercely enjoined on his children, backed up by the terrors of hell. Later this God of Wrath is conceived as the God of Love, and duty to neighbours assumes dominion in man's consciousness. The limitations of society are now found to cramp the free spirit, and there at last arises a conception of duty to oneself. The superstitious man, in the process of throwing off his allegiance to the vengeful God, enthrones Reason, which becomes the Infallible Pope, to be later deposed by the will to self-expression, regardless of the limitations of either God or the cramping institutions of man.

In the early stages man, terrified at the realities of existence, must need cover up the most fearful by masks or illusions, which he called his Ideals. The grinning face of Death was covered with the mask of Immor-

talities; the sordid facts of Sex with the mask of Love. The masks, called ideals, had to be placed upon the face of inexorable facts, or man would have gone mad with terror and disgust. Man felt it as a necessity to believe that the masks were the real faces of facts; and illusions were fostered and institutions were idealized as social duties. But at last pioneers arose who demanded progress. To obtain progress the pleasing ideals had to be shattered, the masks torn off, the old duties repudiated, until the bolder pioneers arrived at duty to self as the end of their being. As opposed to the demands of the will to self-expression, would come Reason suggesting prudence and duty and the other deadly virtues, until the Rationalist, urging duty to one's neighbours, would be as great an obstacle to the freedom of the individual will as the theologian with his insistence on duty to God. Every step forward implies repudiation of some duty, destruction of some ideal, until finally the emancipated soul sees he must repudiate the very idea of duty itself if he would be free.

Reason is overthrown very easily by Shaw, and Will is enthroned on the ruins. To people who have lost the illusion of heaven, he argues, it is very obvious that, as a result of the degradation of life by poverty, it is not worth living for four-fifths of mankind. The reasonable thing for the Rationalist, therefore, is to commit suicide. The fact that he does not is an admission that we do not live by reason, but in obedience to the instinct, or will-to-live, mysteriously implanted within us. Thus the only thing to do is to laugh at the conceit that we are reasonable beings, and see ourselves as the wilful creatures we are. "Faith in reason as a prime motor is no longer the criterion of the sound mind, any more than faith in the Bible is the criterion of righteous intention." (The detail that no Rationalist ever contended that

reason is either a motor or petrol supplying the power, but that it is merely the signpost or guide to conduct, is overlooked in Mr. Shaw's assault.) From the "will-to-live," as the important aspect of our existence, to the enthronement of the will-to-live-as-you-want, is but a short step; and this Will must inevitably clash with the ideals, duties, reason, and the other bonds imposed by the past and present fears of the rest of mankind. To deny one's will of expression becomes the only sin. Poverty means the enforced denial of self or will. Thus money is a necessity, self-denial a crime, and indulgence merely a corollary of desire.

All this is read into the plays of Ibsen with the help of Schopenhauer and William Blake. The latter's contribution seems to be concerned with the idea of excess or surfeit-breeding wisdom—a check upon further indulgence which otherwise might lead to extinction.

This being Shaw's theoretical position, one may now ask whether he has scrapped duty, worshipped money, indulged appetites and passions to excess, trampled on idealism, and abrogated the use of reason.

The fact is that, after roaring valiantly like a lion, Mr. Shaw has eaten grass like a lamb. So far from practising the libertinism his philosophy seems to imply, he has evolved scarcely one redeeming vice. However, his faults of exaggeration, of inconsistency, of confusing his friends and of abusing his opponents, just save him from being really too good to live! He is in habit temperate to the verge of asceticism, as economical as an old maid, an idealist of the most fantastic order, with a sense of duty so insistent and ferocious in its claims as to regard man's personal will to enjoy himself as leading directly to the damnation of the Shavian hell.

After having poured scorn upon reason, he is obliged to describe himself twelve years later as "a reasonable,



patient, consistent, apologetic, laborious person, with the temperament of a schoolmaster and the pursuits of a vestryman." The consistency claimed might be hard to find, but Shaw is aiming at reason even when most unreasonable. The outstanding sins which for forty years Bernard Shaw has been trouncing have been poverty, folly, cowardice, and self-indulgence, in spite of his repudiation of self-denial and reason.

At the outset Mr. Shaw found laws and customs designed to check the badly-controlled passions and ignorance of his fellow-men. Having by temperament a passion for truth and freedom stronger than the other passions of physical appetites, he felt that the repressions designed for grosser men were irksome and unnecessary, and he denounced them, feeling that even if the barriers were removed surfeit would bring wisdom to the most wayward. And, based upon experience of his own abstemiousness, he believed men were fundamentally good, if the institutions erected by past folly and cowardice could be torn down. These institutions, indeed, were the causes of man's present weakness. Poverty, for example, to Shaw is not the result of a man's low earning powers consequent upon defects of character, capacity, or industry, nor is it due to spending more than he can afford. Poverty is the result of the robbery committed by the unscrupulous idlers upon their industrial dupes. Thus, that wealth which consists in fewness of wants, rather than in multitudes of possessions, is not applauded by Shaw as wisdom, but denounced as cowardice. "Want a lot and see that you get it" was Shaw's advice to mankind. Rights, not duties, were inculcated. But very soon the drawbacks of the egoistic attitude are perceived. We find Shaw, in his reply to the attacks of W. H. Mallock on Socialism, written in 1894, scornfully repudiating the notion that men should

measure their services in terms of cash. Something which other men call honour, duty, or religion is held to be more important than riches. True, in later writings conscience is once again belittled as a luxury, to be indulged in only after more vital needs have been attended to; but that even luxuries must be fought for and on occasion died for, being placed before the vital needs of food and material well-being, is constantly stressed in works written almost concurrently with the glorification of money. And again, even when applauding Ibsen's exposure of the enthusiast who, in his devotion to an ideal of religious duty, sacrifices himself, his mother, wife, and child, Shaw is obliged to recognize that the unmitigated self-indulgence of a Peer Gynt is almost as harmful as the self-sacrifice of a Brand. Quite characteristically is Brand denounced for neglect of his dependents in order to reflect his inner light, while in other works Christ's encouragement of similar behaviour is applauded. Blessed are the selfish, in effect, says Shaw. Then at the blessed he shouts, "Commercialized cads"!

He is as perplexing as a revivalist would be who, at the end of a powerful appeal for repentance, invites the converts to go on the spree instead of to the penitent form.<sup>1</sup>

His early statement in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, that "conduct must justify itself by its effect on happiness," evolves later into "give a man health and a course to steer and he'll never stop to trouble about whether he's happy or not," and finally into a repudiation of personal happiness as a justification of conduct, which instead must be modified in relation to a mystical obligation to perform the work of a still more mystical

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that Blanco Posnet, after his "conversion," did lead the way into the bar, offering to stand treat to those who had listened to his preaching.

Life Force, that regards man as impersonally as a man in turn regards a box of matches. Instead of the previous injunction to carry on as you like—excess will tame you—it is discovered that a man needs a religion to inflame him into social righteousness and to prevent his being a coward and a cad; that children must be taught religion in school—though, strangely enough, we afterwards discover a child will learn nothing you try to teach it; that religion makes men happy—though Bunyan and other religious enthusiasts were the most miserable of men. Criminals must apparently do as they like, without the interference of police; but we find also that their expression of personal will, when it becomes too much of a nuisance, will entail the lethal-chamber.

Marriage is assailed. Women must be themselves. The statement that duties to husbands and children are cramping fetters is followed by warnings of the drawbacks of Free Love.

Years before his ratification of the gospel of Ibsen, who is admitted to be one of the two "Arch Individualists of the nineteenth century" (Strindberg being the other), Shaw was expounding Socialism as the cure for the ills of society. Atheism was being preached at the same time; though capitalism, according to Shaw, was built up by generations of Atheistic thinkers, with Malthus as the one Churchman among its prophets.

Individualism and Socialism, when preached simultaneously, make a queer mixture. The advocacy of Atheism by a man who afterwards affirms his conviction that he always knew a religion was essential helps to confuse Mr. Shaw's philosophical position still further. Mr. Shaw's belief in the Single Tax of Henry George evolved to Fabian Socialism, coquetting with Anarchism during the process. At one phase Karl Marx appealed to the young reformer, though Shaw says he was never a

**Materialist.** There are indications of Marxian influence in the early novel, *The Unsocial Socialist*, written in 1884; and at first Shaw tried to defend Marxism against the attacks of the disciples of Jevons, but he found the Marxian shibboleths untenable, and they were speedily abandoned. In later years Shaw even says:—

Marx was by no means infallible: his economics, half borrowed and half home-made by a literary amateur, were not, when strictly followed up, even favourable to Socialism.....Compared to Darwin, he seemed to have no power of observation. There was not a fact in *Das Kapital* that had not been taken out of a book, nor a discussion that had not been opened by somebody else's pamphlet.

Side by side with Ibsen's Individualistic insistence on personal rights as against those of society were proclaimed the social rights of Socialism. These rights, however, imply very serious social duties, but the mixture apparently causes no serious searching of the soul. To complicate matters still further, there was then introduced a belief in religion, which implied the supremacy of duty over all rights, either social or personal. This Irish stew was offered to Englishmen at the point of the pen as food fit for the gods!

Each ingredient has been repeatedly offered as alone necessary for the needs of humanity, and the other constituents of the stew have been denounced as poison—the poison later being applauded as nectar. All these amazing claims have been made in such confident and resounding tones that the senses of the victim are almost deafened by the perplexing clamour. And at the end of it all we find Mr. Shaw cheerfully bemoaning (to choose a phrase in keeping with the subject) the fact that his efforts to make us understand have so far been unsuccessful!

His offer of unlimited freedom to do precisely what you like, providing nobody objects, is on a par with the attitude of a mother who, pointing to a coveted toy, gives the child pennies on condition that they are put into the money box, and later tries to persuade the youngster that the chest protector bought with the proceeds is superior to the rag doll upon which the child had set its heart!

After urging one to rebel against social constraints and duties in obedience to the demands of the will which is more powerful than the reason, he warns us of the frightful severity of the discipline which will ensue; for those young women who have tried the experiment "after a few years have found themselves plunged into duties, responsibilities, and sacrifices from which they were glad to retreat to the life of an ordinary respectable woman." His position is wittily summed up by Mr. Joseph McCabe as follows:—

If you have no passions, follow them. If you are an ascetic, follow your impulses; if you are a voluptuary, follow them at your miserable peril.<sup>1</sup>

Stripped of its inconsistencies and exaggerations, Bernard Shaw's ethical teaching is:—

Demand fiercely the rights of self-expression, of personal honour and dignity. Self-denial is dope preached to a starving man. Fight for an income ample enough to permit of adequate satisfaction of your physical, mental, and spiritual needs, and regard as enemies those who preach contentment with your lot, or who enjoin duties before you have obtained rights. But opportunities of satisfaction having been achieved, use only those which will fit you for service to society. Having got a lot from life, give back more. Control the grosser

<sup>1</sup> *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 87.

appetites to the point of extinction, and fight as fiercely for the honour and dignity of your fellows as you have fought for your own. Self-denial by all means, but only after the opportunities for self-indulgence have been won. Fewness of wants and multitudes of possessions make a man wealthy.

As he makes a character say, one has no more right to consume happiness without producing it than he has a right to consume wealth. His contempt is vitriolic for those who, having received comforts and culture, are prepared to do nothing in return beyond the duties forced upon them by obligation.

Shaw has won material affluence and the recognition and honour he demands. He has abundant personal privileges. But he preaches the restriction of his privileges, or at least of their material basis, in the interest of those without them. A rich man, he wants communism of property, and he curses the servility and meekness of those who will not make the demands on society which can make the division practicable.

Whatever changes one may notice in his teaching are not coincident with the changes in his material fortunes. Socialism is advocated as much in his prosperity as it was in the early days of his poverty, when only sixpence per day was available on which to express his ambitions of self-realization.

There are, roughly speaking, four ways in which mankind can be improved: in body, mind, character, and material possessions. And there are four types of reformers: the doctor, the schoolmaster, the moralist, and the statesman. We may breed a better race; we may educate its mind; we may moralize its character; we may improve its material environment by economic and political reforms. Shaw has stressed these four phases. There have been the Individualist-Anarchist

phase, stressing personal claims; the Socialist phase, which stresses social rights; the Eugenics phase, stressing the need to be well-born and healthy; and the Religious phase, stressing spiritual duties.

But for practical purposes Shaw has two definite and incompatible philosophies. One, covered by his belief in Socialism, insists upon the need for economic and political adjustments; the other emphasizes the need for psychological improvements by means of education, art, breeding, and exercise of the personal will, this aspect being covered by his belief in the Religion of Creative Evolution.

To correspond he has two diverse conceptions of human nature. First, the religionists of all schools invariably denounce sin, or defective human nature, as the cause of all our troubles; change the heart, get right with God, cultivate personal holiness, spiritualize the character, are different ways in which the need, as religion sees it, is expressed.

Second, the political or social reformers of all schools automatically stress the defects in our environment and institutions. Tax this or nationalize that is the cure for all our ills. Of necessity, therefore, the religionist harps upon the badness of man, and the social economist upon the defects of his institutions.

The religionist says: If human nature can be improved, social evils will disappear. The social reformer says: If this or that institution can be abolished or mended, moral evil will be no more.

Mr. Shaw rings the changes upon the necessity for an improvement in our institutions (which he thinks Socialism will bring), and upon the equal necessity for an improvement in man's nature. When in his socio-economic mood, all that is needed is the passing of Acts of Parliament to abolish the evil: Poverty. His view

of human nature then is that man is basically good in character, and would also be good in conduct if Communism were the rule.

When in his metaphysical mood, the need is for a religion, without which the "worms," "cowards," and "cads" who represent humanity will wreck the commonwealth. In this mood his contempt for man is prodigious. Cowardice, selfishness, and folly are the evils to be eradicated before any advance is possible ; not Acts of Parliament, but acts of god-in-man, are needed.

The fact that man on the whole, as Herbert Spencer pointed out, gets the institutions he deserves, and that institutions are the reflex of man's conceptions and needs and cannot get very far ahead of the average character which produced them, is overlooked by Shaw in his Socialistic mood, but in his religious mood he cannot escape it.

Spencer analysed the egoistic and altruistic instincts in man, urging the due satisfaction of both these essential impulses of our nature, blending the claims of each in a coherent philosophy. He demonstrated, as powerfully as Ibsen or Shaw, the evil of self-sacrifice beyond a given point, showing how a man in his zeal for an ideal, by ruining his health and fortunes, not only drags down his dependents, but makes himself a parasitic burden upon his fellows. Shaw, however, goes from the point of demanding personal satisfaction and denying social obligations to the opposite extreme of demanding duties which forbid personal satisfaction.

He never blends these diverse views into one harmonious whole. He notices Ibsen's attack upon self-sacrifice in *Brand* and that upon self-indulgence in *Peer Gynt* ; and he reviews the profoundly interesting mystical play *Emperor and Galilean*, where an attempt is made to unite the two empires of the flesh, or egoism, and the



spirit, or altruism ; but in no play or preface of his own has Shaw systematically attempted to weld together the jagged edges of his own warring views.

One note, however, is insistent and consistent from the first word of folly in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* to the last word of wisdom in *Back to Methuselah*. Personal righteousness is impossible side by side with social injustice. Whether one likes it or not, the saint as well as the sinner is a shareholder in railway companies, where shunters are done to death because it is costly to adopt automatic couplings ; the teetotaler benefits in release from taxation made possible by the sale of alcohol ; and we are all members of an empire made mighty by the subjugation of weaker races and the drawing of the life's blood of factory children.

Personal holiness is a garment of filthy rags while one child is starved, one sempstress is sweated, or one man is devitalized in a slum. Not the landlord, nor the sweating employer, nor the neglectful parent, is alone responsible for these blotches on the body politic, but every unit of society is indicted.

This note has been struck by Bernard Shaw with a courage, a devotion, a penetration which must be applauded long after his inconsistencies have been forgotten. When in this mood our author is not a philosopher but a propagandist, a crusader warring against the desecration of the Holy Grail or unlocking the dungeon doors in the castle of Capitalism. In his zeal to release the oppressed victims of education, he will burn schools and abolish parental authority ; he will blow up the prisons, where the victims called criminals are lodged ; he will strike off the shackles of marriage by free divorce for all ; and he will throw the necessities and luxuries in a common heap to be enjoyed, *sans price*, by all the sons and daughters of men. In this mood he forgets the havoc that may be

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wrought by conferring these tremendous liberties upon the undisciplined child, the vicious waster, the sexually promiscuous, the greedy, and the idle. He forgets his own teaching that men, women, and children must be spiritualized by religion before such liberties are less than disastrous.

The propagandist forgets the philosopher. But Bernard Shaw is not, nor does he claim to be, a philosopher in the classic sense. If he is a philosopher, he is more Carlyle than Kant—without the former's spleen or the latter's system. No, he is more a poker than a systematic theorist. He stirs people up. It annoys him to "see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable"; to see them laughing when they ought to weep.

And yet, paradoxically enough, he makes them laugh when he would make them weep or think. To witness a Shavian play is almost a trial for the initiated. The cackles of laughter which greet every sally against our social follies are distressing to one who knows that the gibe should provoke almost a sob. Herbert Spencer, in his *Autobiography*, says: "My best friends are my worst enemies." Mr. Shaw could truthfully say the same. His power of seeing things naked behind the masks and his extraordinary fecundity of wit are alike among the causes of his success and the secrets of his failure.

He sees the fat, double-chinned, complacent man leaning back to snore after his seven-course dinner provided by the dividends won from devitalized Henry Dubbs, and he lights a firework under his coat-tails to awaken him to a sense of realities. He lights more fireworks to illuminate the social darkness; he provides a gorgeous pyrotechnic display that we may see clearly the horrible forms stowed away in the corners of our civilization. But we clap our hands in appreciation of the brilliant spectacle; or, blinded by the dazzling lights,

we see nothing of the crouching forms, while fat complacency merely grumbles uncomprehendingly at the interruption of his slumbers by the larksome, irresponsible gamin.

To many people Shaw is simply an irritant; and for many more he is that which he despises—an intellectual, functioning merely to stimulate the pleasurable sensations of lovers of amusement. But to the discerning few he is what he wants to be—a philosophic artist or artist-philosopher, in spite of those critics who quarrel with his art and those others who deny his philosophy.

His philosophy has a punch. In the book of life will be found, under the name of Bernard Shaw, not the words of Abou Ben Adhem, but "Write me down as one who *kicked* his fellow men"! And if the kicking has sometimes been unduly vigorous it has been done for our good. Some of Abou Ben Adhem's spirit may perchance be found behind the kicks. Said 'Arriet to her bloke: "Do yer luv us, Bill?" Bill replied: "Course I does!" "Then knock us abaat a bit." Bernard Shaw knocks us "abaat" a lot, because maybe he loves us in proportion. On this hope we will end the chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SHAW'S VIEWS ON EVOLUTION

AFTER advocating Socialism for over twenty years, Bernard Shaw eventually arrived at the doubts which beset all thoughtful reformers some time in their career. At the beginning of the century he seemed definitely to decide that all evidence of progress was an illusion. Man as he is is incapable of progress. "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few." Knowing the way is not enough, for we lack the will. Education, religion, Socialism, any political or economic reforms, are alike useless. We must breed a new race of men.

More recently, in 1921, the War and its aftermath confirmed a doubt, which had been growing for forty years, as to whether the human animal as he now exists is capable of ever solving the problems raised by his own attempts at civilization. Nay, worse; "there seems no compelling reason why he should be saved." Darwinian science holds out no hope whatever. But though the outlook is so black, there is one gleam found in the religion of Creative Evolution. At a certain pitch of intensity the will can, and does, create new tissues, muscles, and organs. A weight-lifter under trivial stimulus can put up a muscle; there is nothing to prevent a philosopher putting up a brain.

Even in the old days, when vindicating the rights of the individual will to freedom of expression over mere social duties, Shaw's analysis of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* forced

upon him the drawbacks of self-indulgence and the need for fusing a man's will with that of the universal purpose. Thus, in his own play published twenty years after, we find Shaw's dramatic prototype, Don Juan, "concerned for the future of the race instead of the freedom of his own instincts." Don Juan represents the development of Shaw's metaphysical belief in Will, conceived as realization of personal Rights, to Will conceived as expression of social duties; from the self-consciousness of the Individualist, through the class-consciousness of the Socialist, to the community-consciousness of the Superman, so that finally the cosmic-consciousness of a God may be achieved. Just as it used to be the rule in politics for every little baby born into the world to be either a little Liberal or a little Conservative, so has it been contended that in philosophy one is always a follower of Aristotle or of his pupil Plato. Shaw has more affinities with the latter than with the former. Indeed, it has been contended by G. K. Chesterton that the reading of Plato late in life suggested the stud-farm idea of progress so trenchantly expounded by the hero of *Man and Superman*, John Tanner. But Shaw was a metaphysician long before then, for the germ of all the later developments in the direction of his religion of Creative Evolution is contained in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. We must now get to grips with the fundamentals of this religion.

Bernard Shaw, like all men who have considered the evidence, is a firm believer in Evolution. But whereas Evolution undermines the theological faith of most of its adherents, Shaw has made of it a religion.

There are roughly five views of the origin and development of man and the universe. At one extreme is the old-fashioned belief portrayed in Genesis, which depicts each species as having had a separate creation. Then

there is the belief of the Christian who, like Professor Drummond, rejects Genesis, but believes that the evolution of life has been consciously directed by an omnipotent and benevolent God. On the sceptical side is the cruder sort of Materialism, which, with Democritus, assumes the world was made out of dead atoms as the result of chance. Next is the mechanistic theory, made popular by the strict Darwinians, which, rejecting or ignoring the existence of God, assumes that all complex species, including man, have been evolved from a few simple forms chiefly by a process of selection of chance variations, known as "the Survival of the Fittest." In the centre of the two conceptions (each with its two variants) is the belief in Vitalism, or, as Shaw calls it, Creative Evolution, which conceives the main factors of development as consisting of a will, or vital impulse, striving for more complete expression. All of these five positions have minor variants according to the personal equation of their respective theorists.

Shaw before the age of twenty had rejected both Materialism and Garden-of-Edenism. Before he was thirty, though describing himself as an Atheist, he believed that both the Drummond and the Darwinian view of Evolution were equally untenable; so finally he accepted the middle position of Vitalistic, or Creative, Evolution.

All through Shaw's work, including the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, contempt is poured upon current theology. The belief in the doctrine of the Atonement is a cowardly attempt to shuffle off your responsibilities on Christ and an excuse for being wicked and getting to heaven free of cost. In his printed lecture on *Modern Religion* he says: "You have under the name of Methodism what is to me quite the most abhorrent and debasing form of religion that exists—the sort of Chris-

tianity that centres round the abominable doctrine of the Atonement as preached by the followers of Wesley." The current view of Christianity shows how God may be cheated, and salvation got for nothing by sweaters, sharks, and hypocrites. "Also how God, though the most dangerously capricious and short-tempered of Anarchists, is also the most sentimental of dupes." The cultured class, who have thrown off that superstition, are "busy with the sentimental religion of love, in which they are still wallowing, and which only substitutes twaddle for terror." We must rebel against the spurious Christianity of asceticism, because it starves the belief in oneself, which is indispensable to a belief in others. Not only must belief in the old-fashioned capricious and revengeful God, who sends hell and demands atonements, be abandoned; but equally untenable is the view that man requires forgiveness for sins which are trivial compared to the colossal cruelties found in the universe that God is alleged to have made. It is impossible to reconcile the omnipotence of God with his benevolence. "It is all very well to talk about a God of love; but one could not live in the world without seeing that if he were responsible for everything he was not only the God of love, but also of cancer and epilepsy.....On the other hand, you had certain attempts to sentimentalize God, by ignoring cancer and epilepsy, and talking a lot of charming flapdoodle, and saying love is enough, and love is everything, and God is love. The sickening talk about love, love, love went on until you got a God who was a sort of sentimental dupe." The people who believe in a personal God have never thought about the problem, and by giving God a male sex have kept up the Oriental idea that women have no souls.

But if Shaw is severe upon the drawbacks of orthodox religion, he is no less critical of orthodox science. All

through his career he has poured contempt upon science, especially upon those "unscrupulous quacks" who call themselves doctors. This particular phase of his teaching is most elaborately expressed in the Preface to *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Among the chief sins of science are those relating to the practices of vaccination and vivisection.

Rejecting the current religious interpretation of affairs, Shaw regards with equal scorn the Darwinian view of Evolution, and we find him in the *Quintessence of Ibsenism* as energetic as a Jesuit in denunciation of this frightful creed. But developing a lecture on Darwin, delivered in 1906, he rises to the most dizzy heights of misunderstanding and abuse in his long discussion of Natural Selection in "The Infidel Half Century" Preface to *Back to Methuselah*. Let us follow the reasoning.

Thoughtful people, rejecting the cruel, unjust, and disorderly God of Christianity, were still unable to account for the appearance of design in the universe, the argument for which had been put so clearly by Paley. If a watch needed an artificer to account for it, how much more so did a man and a universe? Darwin came along with an answer having no need for God as a hypothesis. Selecting the giraffe as an example, one may believe either that God originally created its long neck, or that an animal with a neck of normal length, by stretching out to reach the tender leaves high up on the tree, would, in successive generations, elongate the neck until it functions as we see it to-day. Or a prehistoric breeder might have selected the longest-necked animals and bred from them deliberately to secure a natural curiosity. Darwin rejected all these explanations, and suggested that neither the will of God, nor man or animal was originally responsible. Darwin simply said that if the neck of the animal was too short it died by being



unable to reach its food. Animals with longer necks would have a better chance of survival, and would thus be selected by Nature to carry on the species, until eventually a race of long-necked animals would be the result. This reduces the process of animal evolution to accident, because mind is banished from the universe. Consciousness, purpose, and will, other than the blind will to satisfy hunger, play no part in the process. Shaw then proceeds to criticize "this ghastly and damnable reduction of beauty and intelligence, of strength and purpose," to mere chance. The believers in Natural Selection, it appears, are Fatalists, banishing or ignoring will: they regard Nature as nothing but a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter, whose function it is blindly to starve and murder everything "not lucky enough to survive in the universal struggle for hogwash." It was a belief "in hunger, death, stupidity, delusion, chance, and bare survival" as the agents of transformation. Its supporters imagine that if you stop selection you stop development and inaugurate a disastrous degeneration, for "according to the theory of Natural Selection progress can take place only through an increase of severity in the material conditions of existence."

In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* we learned that the mechanical utilitarian ethic "treats man as the sport of every circumstance and ignores his will altogether." But thirty years of further ripe reflection upon the subject encouraged Mr. Shaw to still deeper profundities, and we get:—

As there is no place in Darwinism for free will, or any other sort of will, the Neo-Darwinists held that there is no such thing as self-control.

We further discover Darwinism taught that—

Prostitutes are produced by starvation wages,

and not by feminine concupiscence. It threw the authority of science on the side of the Socialist, who said that he who would reform himself must first reform society.

Neo-Darwinism in politics produced the war, and now "one half of Europe, having knocked the other half down, is trying to kick it to death"; this being also sound Neo-Darwinism.

But, alas, even after having studied Mr. Shaw's profound objections, you cannot finally disprove the theory; and, if a man contends you are solely a product of Circumstantial Selection, "you can only tell him out of the depths of your inner conviction that he is a fool and liar." Although this is all you can say or do, Shaw then proceeds to offer forty more pages of objections.

Now, what shall be said of this farrago of misrepresentations? One is tempted to accept the explanation given in the last page of the author's Preface, where he admits: "My sands are running out.....I am doing the best I can at my age. My powers are waning." Mr. Shaw is nearly seventy. Would it be cruel to add that the remark of Huxley about any scientific man who had attained the age of sixty should be poleaxed might with profit be extended to playwrights? Instead of being cruel, however, we will be patient, and examine some of Shaw's opinions on the strength of which he says: "You can be a thoroughgoing Neo-Darwinian without imagination, metaphysics, poetry, conscience, or decency." One may admit that, however dispensable in a critic of Darwinism are some of the above requirements, that of imagination seems a prime necessity.

We will briefly consider Shaw's objections.

Darwinism regards Nature as a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter. Here Shaw has confused the mechanistic theory with the old-fashioned Materialism,

which has never been supported by one Darwinian. The position is put by Professor Haeckel, who on this speaks for the whole school :—

Pure monism is identical neither with the theoretical Materialism that denies the existence of spirit and dissolves the world into a heap of dead atoms, nor with the theoretical spiritualism (lately entitled "energetic" spiritualism by Ostwald) which rejects the notion of matter.

Haeckel goes on to confirm the words of Goethe, that "matter cannot exist and be operative without spirit, nor spirit without matter."

Matter or infinitely extended substance, and Spirit (or Energy) or sensitive or thinking substance, are the two fundamental attributes, or principal properties, of the all-embracing divine essence of the world, the universal substance.<sup>1</sup>

No matter is dead, says science, and the "dead atom" theory was as dead as Democritus long before Darwinism.

Darwinism does not imply Fatalism and the abolition of will and mind from the universe. It implies merely that the will and mind are conditioned by pressure of circumstances acting upon the potentialities contained within the individual. Even Shaw rejects the notion that the "will is stronger than destiny." He goes on to say that "only by plunging into illusions to which every fact gives the lie can he persuade himself that his will is a force that can overcome all other forces, or that it is less conditioned by circumstances than a wheel-barrow is."<sup>2</sup> No Darwinian has ever claimed more than that.

When Shaw contends that his opponents assert that there is no such thing as will and self-control, then, in his own words, "you can only tell him out of the depths

<sup>1</sup> *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 48.

of your inner conviction that he is a fool and a liar." As he is obliged to admit, "self-control is just the one quality of survival value which Circumstantial Selection must invariably and inevitably develop in the long run." And for the very reasons which he gives.

Then, it appears, "Neo-Darwinians were persistently assuring us that temperance legislation is a vain defiance of Natural Selection, and that the true way to deal with drunkenness is to flood the country with cheap gin and let the fittest survive." Has not Mr. Shaw here mixed his opponents' position with his own? No Darwinian ever taught anything so silly, but Mr. Shaw is the man who supports the idea that the way to wisdom is through excess, that the bad habits of men are to be cured by surfeit, and that money, by permitting of indulgence for the weak-willed, wipes them out. The cheap-gin solution then is more logically part of his teaching. And, significantly enough, his Socialist colleagues have many times attacked temperance propaganda on the ground that, if the workers become teetotal, wages would fall to the subsistence level made lower by the abolition of drink.

Shaw makes two incompatible accusations against the mechanists, who are accused of denying any possibility of human improvement, and yet are also accused of teaching that improvement can come only through increased severity in material conditions! One cancels the other. Again Shaw confuses his own teaching with that of his opponents. Darwinism does not teach that human progress is impossible. Indeed, the teaching of Eugenics, which later we shall find Shaw supporting, is a direct application of the principle of selection of good specimens and rejection of bad ones for the improvement of the human species, which Darwin showed had been the chief agent used by Nature to achieve improvements in the past. Darwinism teaches that primitive man

evolved from (that is, improved upon) his ape-like ancestor, that civilized man improved upon palæolithic man, and that with the application of intelligent selection future man will improve upon the present. The modern Darwinian Eugenist wants to improve both the nature and the nurture of man. It is Mr. Shaw, if anybody, who denies progress, who teaches it is an illusion, who contends that the nineteenth century struck the rock-bottom point of degradation in human history. And we might also say that it was the Socialist, Karl Marx, who preached the doctrine of increasing misery as the essential prelude to the social revolution. Certainly no representative Darwinian, as such, takes up that foolish position.

Darwinism, we are told, supported the theory that prostitution is caused by low wages rather than by the concupiscence of females, and that before man can be improved he must improve society. If there is one thing orthodox Darwinism does *not* teach, it is that. It is Mr. Shaw who writes plays demonstrating that the economic factor is the chief cause of prostitution, in face of the opposite teaching of Darwinian sociology represented by Ferri, Lombroso, Ellis, and the rest. One only needs to read Herbert Spencer, the chief representative of the social applications of Darwinism, to find that society is composed of individual units whose characters must be changed *before* it is possible to permanently improve our institutions, instead of *after*, as Shaw says is the teaching of Darwinism.

As for war being the outcome of Darwinism, it will also be found that Spencer opposed war and militarism, and protested against the kicking of nations to death and the conquering of inferior races, as vigorously as does Mr. Shaw; and incidentally, unlike Shaw, when a war did break out he stuck to his position and refrained from recruiting. Benisons on war are found,

on the whole, more among Mr. Shaw's anti-Darwinian allies, the clergy, than among Darwinians. And Nietzsche, who is claimed by Shaw as a Vitalist philosopher ahead of the Darwinians in penetration, probably applauded war and denounced pity as much as any man that ever lived. Surely once again Shaw has accused his opponents of being responsible for the teaching of his allies. But the Vitalist method, we are told, Nietzsche notwithstanding, is the method of co-operation. To avoid war it repudiates the kicking-to-death policy of the Darwinians. What Shaw calls "the great central truth of the Will to Power" doctrine of Nietzsche surely implies domination of the weak by the strong, which is the essence of militarism and the denial of co-operation. It is the weak who are forced to combine. One might more reasonably blame Shaw's teaching—of wanting and getting what you want regardless of canons of duty and obligations to others—as being behind the spirit of war. Pugnacity is an innate instinct. Primitive men fight and plunder because they love to fight and plunder, and if men must do what they want to do why blame them for making war? Thus Shaw's "great central truth" is more responsible than any application of Darwinism for war and ruffianism. Of course Shaw does not believe in war and its accompaniments, any more than his opponents do; but if assumed logical consequences are inferred from one theory, the same can be done with another. It might, on Shaw's method of argument, be easily shown that, because he believes the Life Force has blundered into cancers and epilepsy, a belief in his theory implies a belief in terrible diseases as essential agents in further progress.

Shaw completely misunderstands the theory he opposes. If he will consult Darwin's *Descent of Man*, Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, Haeckel's *Confession of Faith of a*

*Man of Science*, or Spencer's works on Ethics and Psychology, he will find that sociality and sympathy are stressed as indispensable adjuncts of survival and progression in the struggle for existence; for, as Darwin rightly contends, "those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring."

Shaw imagines that Darwinism implies the trampling to death of the weak and increasing severity in the general conditions as the sole factors in the term "Struggle for Existence." Darwin said: "I use this term in a large and metaphorical sense, *including dependence of one being upon another*, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny."

It is true that certain writers like Benjamin Kidd assumed severity of conditions as a Darwinian essential, and that opponents of Socialism have rubbed in unduly the "gladiatorial show" aspects of nature as having been active agents of progress. But even if conflict and rigour were the only agents in the past (which Darwin never contended), it does not follow they must be so in the future. Man's conscious intervention can do much to mitigate the rigours of nature, as civilized life has proved. In the eighties, when Shaw was forming his opinions, he heard much of the assumed scientific validity of struggle as a factor in progress. The anti-Socialists threw that part of Darwinism which suited their purpose at the heads of the Socialists, while the latter were no less fond of urging the presence of the class struggle as a justification of their position. Shaw developed a repugnance to both interpretations of the doctrine of conflict, and Marxism and Darwinism were alike rejected. Jevons was substituted for Marx, and Butler for Darwin.

Shaw would quite rightly object to an argument that Socialism has been disposed of if one could show the fallacy of the class-war doctrine; but when he rejected the struggle aspect of Darwinism he thought the whole theory had been upset.

If an opponent, on the basis of the theory of the class war, contended that this committed the Socialists to the belief that the struggle must always persist, or that, because poverty and exploitation had been essential accompaniments of previous systems, the Socialists' recognition of the fact committed them to a belief in their continuance under Socialism, Mr. Shaw would invoke the depths of his inner consciousness for a suitable retort. He, however, applies this fallacious reasoning to the theories of Darwin.

Shaw seems to have confounded the views of the Marxians with those of Darwinism, between which admittedly there is some affinity. The Marxians were quick to seize those points in the Darwinian theory which coincided with their own, loudly proclaiming adherence to views of high authority, and dubbing their own notions "scientific" Socialism. Marx sent a copy of *Das Kapital* to Darwin with little result. In a conversation with Dr. Aveling, a prominent disciple of Marx, Darwin protested against the label of Atheism being attached to his views; while Engels, in turn, wrote scathing indictments in the name of Materialism against the physical scientists who rejected his narrow economic creed. The Marxians, if anybody, with their Materialism banished will from the universe, advocated economic determinism, stressed the conflict of the classes, and preached the inevitability of increasing misery as a prelude to revolution.

Shaw has mixed up Marxism with Darwinism, of which it is actually a burlesque, and has trounced the



latter for the sins of the former. But even the Marxian did not deny the possibility of progress, nor rule out the influence of co-operation in the future affairs of men.

The majority of Socialists, especially on the Continent, have accepted Darwinism, and some of their most influential leaders in England, including Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, are keen Darwinians. In face of this, Shaw's attempt to show that progress is opposed by a belief in Darwinism breaks down entirely. Even the Neo-Darwinians represented by the Karl Pearson school, who doubt the *permanent* effects of a modified environment, believe in eugenic influences being applied to heredity, with a view to a vast improvement in man's body, mind, and character.

As for science being unable to explain consciousness, the theories offered by Haeckel and others are surely deserving of consideration. In any case, one would like to know how it can be explained by Shaw or anybody else on the Life Force hypothesis. He knows no more about the origin of consciousness than does a Salvation Army captain who says God made all things and lets it go at that.

We are told that those who give up Materialism while clinging to Rationalism either relapse into abject submission to Roman Catholicism or are caught by the attempts of mystics to found a new faith. This was written in 1891, and comes peculiarly from the man who afterwards offered the Life Force religion, whose mystical metaphysicism is applauded as among its best virtues. Taking the leading Rationalists of the nineteenth century who were also Natural Selectionists, we had Darwin, Wallace, Mill, Spencer, Huxley, Haeckel, Tyndall, and Weismann. All of these Rationalists specifically rejected Materialism. Not one of them ever relapsed into Catholicism, nor got

caught by the mystics, unless Wallace's adherence to Spiritism comes under that heading.

Finally, we reach the point where we are told that people are now turning in weary disgust from Neo-Darwinism and Mechanism to Vitalism or Creative Evolution. If Shaw means, as he appears to do, by Neo-Darwinism, the belief in Natural Selection as the sole factor in Evolution, and by Vitalism the theory of Lamarck which he has described as such, the reply is that, with the one possible exception of Weismann, nobody ever believed in Natural Selection as the *sole* factor in Evolution.<sup>1</sup> Spencer, Haeckel, Huxley, and Darwin all referred to the direct action of environment upon organisms, and also insisted upon what Shaw calls the "vitalistic" factor of Lamarck, which to him is so important. Spencer especially carried on incessant warfare against any attempt to limit the action of evolution to selection. Strangely enough, it was the Vitalistic Wallace who, specifically in England, was in favour of excluding the Lamarckian factor from the theory. The swing has been in the reverse direction to that described by Shaw. Darwinians first accepted Lamarck's belief that acquirements were inherited, which belief is now being doubted among biologists more noticeably every year. Of course Shaw is all wrong in confusing Lamarckism with Vitalism or Creative Evolution. The typical Neo-Lamarckians were Mechanistic to a man (Spencer, Haeckel, Darwin, etc.), while the anti-Mechanist Wallace was also anti-Lamarckian. We also find that the leading anti-Lamarckian in England to-day, Professor Thomson, embraces the Vitalistic position.

<sup>1</sup> Weismann admits in his *Evolution Theory* (1904 edition): "I know of only two prominent workers of our day who have given thoroughgoing adherence to my views—Emery in Boulogne and J. A. Thomson in Aberdeen." But Professor Thomson says in *Heredity* that he does not accept all the views of Weismann.

To understand Bernard Shaw's views on Evolution the history of the theory must be studied.<sup>1</sup> The Greek thinkers, from Thales to Epicurus, were wrestling with the conception several centuries before Christ; and a Roman writer, Lucretius, about 50 B.C., made a striking anticipation of modern theories on anthropological origins. It was not, however, until the eighteenth century that the subject became really important. Men like Treviranus, Linnæus, Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, etc., contributed to the theory in their various ways. But Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) was the man who first thought out the position in a scientific manner, and it is around his name that one of the outstanding controversies in biology is still waged. Goethe approached the subject from the standpoint of philosophy; while Lorenz Oken, in 1809, was picturing Evolution in terms of the "everlasting transmutations of the Holy Ghost." As against Hegel, who was stressing Reason as the supreme reality, came Schopenhauer, who insisted that the driving force behind phenomena was the Will-to-Live, which Nietzsche in turn transformed into the Will-to-Power. With Shaw we have a blending of the conceptions as the Will-to-Higher-Consciousness. Less heterodox thinkers speak instead of the Will of God. Shaw calls this vital element, working in and through living forms to more complete expression, the Life Force. Charles Darwin and most of the later Evolutionists dispensed with the hypothesis of a dynamic Vital Force, and this is one of Shaw's chief grievances against them. The only vitalistic element assumed by the Mechanists (such as Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, etc.) was the inherent tendency of organisms to vary from the parents. Lamarck had

<sup>1</sup> A good popular account is Mr. E. Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution*. Professor H. F. Osborn's *From the Greeks to Darwin* is on a more ambitious scale. But neither of these is quite up to date.

conceived these variations being affected by the striving of the organism to attain a given end, such as abundant food, etc. Any development of an organ occasioned by the results of the effort, such as size or strength of limb, etc., was handed on to the progeny, which then in successive generations became so modified that in time a new species was produced.

Darwin accepted this idea, but laid much more stress upon the selective and rejective agencies acting upon chance variations. The choice of mates as sexual partners was urged, in addition to Natural Selection in general. Wallace preferred to stress Natural Selection, introducing, however, divine interference to account for the evolution of certain faculties in man. Weismann came along and denied that the acquirements stressed by Lamarck as the result of use and disuse of organs could be transmitted by inheritance; in other words, any modification induced by practice, such as the developed muscles in a blacksmith's arm or a musician's proficiency, was held not to affect the children of the blacksmith or pianist concerned. Those who believe that the acquirements of the parent are handed on to their children are now called Neo-Lamarckians, while their opponents are referred to as Neo-Darwinians. Charles Darwin, then, was a Neo-Lamarckian. Shaw in 1903 supported the Weismann position, but without giving any reason—indeed, without ever mentioning his recantation; in 1920 he appears as an aggressive opponent. He has confused his position still more by adopting the views of Samuel Butler, who in the eighties attacked Darwinism from the Vitalistic standpoint. Scientists speak of matter and force in a mechanical sense, but Butler decided that force must be conceived as vital, so Vital Force was adopted as the mainspring of Evolution. This Vital Force of Butler was fused with

Schopenhauer's Will-to-Live, and adopted as the Life Force by Bernard Shaw. The Life Force was then conceived as the organizing potency which enables matter to achieve higher forms on the way to complete consciousness.

Now, whether acquirements are or are not inheritable is one question, and whether there is or is not an inherent upward vital tendency implanted in living forms is another. These are quite separate problems. Shaw wrongly speaks of Neo-Lamarckian when he means Vitalism, confusing both himself and his readers.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to state, therefore, that Lamarck was not a Vitalist, for he said:—

Life is a purely physical phenomenon. All its phenomena depend on mechanical, physical, and chemical causes which are inherent in the nature of matter itself.

Shaw, on the other hand, believes in a mystical

<sup>1</sup> In his use of the term "Vitalist" Shaw plunges the subject into almost inextricable confusion. He says "The Old Vitalist, who was essentially a Materialist, has evolved into the New Vitalist, who is, as every genuine scientist must be, finally, a metaphysician." But these "New Vitalists," we learn, objected to be called Vitalists on the grounds "that vitality is scientifically inadmissible," and "that force, being by definition anything that can alter the speed or direction of matter in motion (briefly, that can overcome inertia), is essentially a Mechanistic conception. Here we had the New Vitalist, only half extricated from the Old Mechanist, objecting to be called either, and unable to give a lead in the new direction."

If the "Old Vitalist," whoever he was, was a Materialist, and the New Vitalist is partly or wholly a Mechanist, one wonders who are the people whom Shaw ropes in as supporters of his position. However, Shaw expects that in the future the New Vitalists, who are Mechanists, will cease to boggle at the name "Vitalist," and to object to the term "Force" being used "to denote metaphysical as well as physical overcomers of inertia." In the meantime their disgust is taken for granted, and they are converted in anticipation! Quite a Shavian procedure, on which basis truth becomes precisely what you want it to be rather than what it is.

abstraction called "Life Force," which exists apart from the forms with which it becomes associated. In this he independently formulates a similar idea to Professor Bergson's *elan vital*; but Bergson does not make the mistake of confusing Lamarckism with his theory: he leaves the Lamarck *versus* Weismann question quite open. As an illustration that Vitalism is not necessarily associated with Neo-Lamarckism, we have in England, working in the closest harmony, Professors P. Geddes and J. A. Thomson, both of whom are Vitalists; but the former is a Neo-Lamarckian, the latter is an opponent.

Again, having Weismann and his supporters in mind, Shaw vilifies Darwinians as if they all rejected the Lamarckian principle, when actually Darwin and most of his contemporaries included it in their own beliefs. When, therefore, Shaw says we are turning in disgust from Neo-Darwinism and Mechanism to Vitalism and Creative Evolution, he has mixed up separate conceptions. A Mechanist can consistently accept or reject the Lamarckian theory in respect to acquirements, and so can the Vitalist.

Science during the last forty years has not moved from Neo-Darwinism, for, beginning with Weismann, more than half our evolutionists now reject or doubt the potency once claimed for the Lamarckian factor. On the other hand, the Vitalists are in a hopeless minority, though the names of adherents like Lloyd Morgan, Nageli, Driesch, Reinke, Geddes, Thomson, and Bergson show that the conception must not be despised.

How far the contention, that modern science is turning away from the Mechanistic view of evolution to the Vitalistic conception to which Shaw subscribes, is accurate, can be seen by the many expressions of opinion collected by Mr. Walter Mann in his book,

*Modern Materialism* (1921), from which I borrow a few quotations:—

"The doctrine of a special vital force has received its death-blow at the hands of modern science."—Professor Meldola, *The Chemical Synthesis of Vital Products*, vol. i, p. 6; 1904.

"I know of no authority in recent years which recognizes a distinct vital force; all students of nature, so far as I am aware, explain all the phenomena of life by means of physical and chemical forces."—Professor J. S. Kingsley, quoted by Professor Dolbear in *Matter, Ether, Motion*; 1899.

"The consensus of opinion among biologists, if one may judge from a multitude of expressions by them concerning life, is that all the phenomena exhibited by a living thing are finally resolvable into physical and chemical processes."—Professor A. E. Dolbear, *Life from a Physical Standpoint*, p. 4; Biological Lectures, 1895.

"All life phenomena are determined by chemical processes. This is equally the case whether we have to do with the contraction of a muscle, with the process of secretion, or with the formation of an embryo or a single organ."—Professor Jacques Loeb, *The Mechanistic Conception of Life*, p. 103; 1912.

"Life is, therefore, quite inseparable from chemical reactions, and on the whole what we call life is nothing else but a complex of innumerable chemical reactions in the living substance which we call protoplasm."—Professor Czapek, *Chemical Phenomena of Life*, p. 63; 1911.

"The problems of life are essentially problems of matter; we cannot conceive of life in the scientific sense as existing apart from matter."—Professor E. A. Schafer, *Life: Its Nature, Origin, and Maintenance*, p. 8; 1912.

"Living organisms contain no special vital elements differing from those of non-living matter, and are actuated by no special vital force."—E. R. Goodrich, *The Nature and Origin of Life*, p. 15; 1912.

"To me the conclusion has for many years commended itself—that the materialist and mechanical scheme of nature (including man's nature), elaborated by physical science, is true and trustworthy, whatever there may be outside and beyond the possibilities of human knowledge."—Sir Ray Lankester, *Preface to Modern Science and the Illusions of Professor Bergson*, by Hugh Elliot; 1912.

Shaw's rejection of Natural Selection<sup>1</sup> would be laughed out of court by every living authority, with the exception of Professor Eimer. The Vitalists believe as firmly in Natural Selection as Darwin did, but conceive it more in its rejective aspects. Our two leading British Vitalists say:—

Natural Selection remains still a *vera causa* in the origin of species, but the function ascribed to it is practically reversed. It exchanges its former supremacy as the supposed sole determinant among practically indefinite possibilities of structure and function for the more modest position of simply accelerating, retarding, or terminating the process of otherwise determined change. It furnishes the brake rather than the steam or the rails for the journey of life; or, in better metaphor, instead of guiding the ramifications of the tree of life, it would, in Mivart's excellent phrase, do little more than apply the pruning-knife to them.<sup>2</sup>

In ridiculing Natural Selection as banishing will from the universe, Shaw overlooks the point that Selection acts upon psychic potentialities or variations, which are

<sup>1</sup> As usual, Shaw is inconsistent. In his Preface, "Parents and Children" (1914), he says: "The theory of Natural Selection cannot be kept out of schools, because many of the natural facts that present the most plausible appearance of design can be accounted for by Natural Selection; and it would be as absurd to keep a child in delusive ignorance of so potent a factor in evolution as to keep it in ignorance of radiation or capillary attraction."

<sup>2</sup> *Evolution*, Gadden and Thomson, p. 248.



dismissed as mere "blind will to satisfy hunger" etc.; but even this, as he agrees, is the "will to live." It is therefore only a question of degree, and the difference between the Selectionist position and his own is by no means so great as he imagines. For the Life Force will of Shaw is portrayed in its earlier stages as blindly groping to satisfy its desires and making blunders innumerable.

Shaw has simply made an abstraction out of the blind wills of organisms and called it the Life Force, which he then thinks of as objectively as if it had a separate existence. The Life Force is conceived as being conscious of its purpose in man, which purpose is a still more heightened consciousness. But the "blind will to satisfy hunger," especially among animals, is considerably stronger than any will to evolve heightened consciousness. So, in the last resort, and in spite of Shaw's scorn of the accidental methods of selection acting upon hunger, etc., the stupid blunderings of his Life Force are also blind efforts made fruitful by accidents of circumstance. Selection is not conceived even by Mechanists as the motive factors within, but rather as the agencies operating by acceptance or rejection upon those factors. Selection selects, it does not create what it operates upon. Failure to recognize this is Shaw's cardinal error in his criticism of Darwinism. The same error is committed when Rationalism is attacked. Knowing no action can take place without volition, and finding certain desires usually stronger than reason, he dismisses or minimizes reason as an agent in conduct, and throws the whole burden upon the will. But no Rationalist ever argued that we are born, or get hungry, or fall in love because we first reasoned ourselves into that position. These things happen, and reason is merely the selective agency which chooses or influences the way our innate desires shall be gratified and our wants

fulfilled. Every Rationalist knows that "the head is the attorney to the heart," for, as Herbert Spencer puts it in his *Social Statics*, "the world is governed or overthrown by feelings to which ideas serve only as guides." The Rationalist admits that the wants of man are the impelling forces, and, like Shaw, believes these wants should be influenced by the understanding. Reason is selective rather than creative.

Shaw prefers to throw the whole weight of the factors making for progress upon the inner urge of instinct or will rather than upon the factors of selection or reason. As a biological metaphysician he exaggerates the psychic factor, while as a Socialist he overrates the power of economic environment.

In his account of Evolution he dramatizes the situation as he dramatized his account of Christianity. Instead of Jesus as the hero and Paul as the villain, we have Lamarck billed as the hero and Darwin as the villain. But though these are the names on the bills, in Shaw's consciousness Butler is the hero, and Weismann, the wicked decapitator of the tails of mice, is the villain. Shaw has elsewhere justified the tendency of the Socialist propagandist to picture the capitalist as a heartless wretch and the worker as a stained-glass angel, for the popular mind responds only to illusions.<sup>1</sup> But melodramatic methods applied to science are apt to mislead. A certain statement of Shaw's throws light upon his own methods: "The way to get at the merits of a case is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against." No

<sup>1</sup> "Socialism wins its disciples by presenting civilization to them as a popular melodrama, as a Pilgrim's Progress through trial and combat against the powers of evil to the bar of poetic justice with paradise beyond.....It must be hidden under a veil of illusions embroidered with promises." (From *Forecasts of the Coming Century*.)

one can accuse Shaw of failing to apply his own maxim of controversy. But if, as Shaw once said, "the liar's punishment is that he cannot believe any one else," it is equally true that the exaggerator's punishment is that nobody will believe him.

At the end of this Chapter it is, perhaps, as well to say that I have not intended to justify any particular theory of Evolution. I leave the Vitalism *versus* Mechanism controversy quite open, and also that relating to the transmissibility of acquirements.

Charles Darwin's views have been modified by the Mendelians and the Mutationists, and his theory of Sexual Selection does not warrant the stress he laid upon it, as Wallace has shown. But the minimizing of Darwin can be carried too far, even by those who have little sympathy with Shaw's exaggerations. Joseph McCabe, for example, in his book on *George Bernard Shaw*, after rebuking Shaw for his attack upon Darwinism, some years later wrote as follows:—

I am far from pleading that Darwin was not wrong on most important matters. There have been three-quarters of a century of intense observation since he planned his theory. (*Literary Guide*, April, 1922.)

This is too extreme a way of stating the post-Darwinian developments, and on reflection an informed student like Mr. McCabe will, I think, admit the exaggeration, for he has often protested against similar statements made by others.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LIFE-FORCE RELIGION

THE social organism may be compared in multitudes of particulars to the biological organism, as Herbert Spencer amply demonstrated in his *Principles of Sociology*. But does a society duplicate a human being in going through a period of infancy, youth, maturity, old age, and death, as Professor Draper contended in his *History of Intellectual Development in Europe*? Further, are there in our racial ancestry any inherent forces which of necessity impel organisms to develop from species of simple forms to those of greater complexity, such as there are at work evolving the ovum into the foetus, and later the child into the man? The Mechanist says No: the Vitalist says Yes.

Professor Bergson, in his *Creative Evolution*, is the leader of the school which believes that some impulse insinuating itself into matter by virtue of an inherent impetus forces its way upward in the scale of consciousness, creating whatever organic equipment it needs to ensure fuller expression. This is put in opposition to the Mechanistic theory that represents blind appetites and accidental variations as being developed by the selective processes of Nature, which as a whole has no conscious end in view.

Without being indebted to Professor Bergson, Bernard Shaw has formulated what he calls the religion of Creative Evolution, and he has given it dramatic expression in his plays, especially in *Man and Superman* and in the cycle of five plays known as *Back to Methuselah*. *Man*

*and Superman* was written over twenty years ago, and is its author's most brilliant achievement. Indeed, so dazzling is it that the religion it was intended to introduce is lost amid the literary scintillations. The later cycle was issued as a variant on the same theme, in the hope that the religion would be more fully appreciated in the less ornate guise which Shaw's waning powers made obligatory. The new work, as compared with the old, is wordy, and in parts even tedious. The three middle plays scarcely advance the religious conception at all, and far too much space is devoted to the idea of an extended duration of human life. Taking the two sets of plays, with their Prefaces and other accompaniments, and paying attention to references found scattered in other parts of Shaw's work, we get, as far as his inconsistencies of expression will permit, the following very stimulating conception of his religious creed.

Admitting that their origins are inexplicable, Shaw assumes two main entities in the universe—matter and the Life Force. The Life Force is conceived as the Will-to-Live more abundantly. It associates with matter during countless eons of time, and by the method of trial and error it succeeds in organizing this substance into various forms. All kinds of grotesque monsters are produced, from the microscopic germs of fever to the mighty monsters whose bones are found in the various strata. Countless contrivances are adopted to ensure survival, and species after species has been scrapped in the semi-conscious efforts of the Life Force to become fully conscious of its own purpose. What is that purpose? Not size or strength, for the rocks are littered with the bones of extinct monsters. Not beauty or speed, for these were achieved among the birds and insects before man appeared. More complex organization is aimed at, so that finally brains, capable of helping the

Life Force in its efforts to achieve still more complete consciousness, can be developed. Eyes were evolved in response to a need, lest the organism should dash itself to pieces against the obstacles in its path. A brain was needed as a mental eye, to enable more subtle obstacles to be surmounted; and, finally, after mistakes innumerable, after endless suffering and wasted effort, the Life Force has blundered on until the human consciousness has been achieved. But man, in spite of his supremacy, is a bungler, swayed hither and thither by his appetites, and, having no enduring will to higher consciousness, must in turn be displaced by the Superman. We have had Supermen like Napoleon and Cromwell in the past, but we must have nations of Supermen with their collective will and purpose directed to still higher achievements. And, later, Super-Supermen will aspire to free consciousness from the cramping claims of the flesh, from the distractions of the appetites, reaching out to the "vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence," and continually evolving to ends now unseen, ever aspiring to make the unrealized realizable. Extinction is the penalty for stagnation, and as organisms have been blotted out by the Life Force in the past, so man, if he will not aspire, will likewise perish, no more regretted than the *Diplodocus*. For, as Lilith says: "Of Life only there is no end; and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines."<sup>1</sup>

The Life Force, first functioning as a single cell with a neuter sex, evolves male and female to achieve higher complexity. Separate duties are accepted, the male

<sup>1</sup> *As Far as Thought Can Reach.*

being chiefly concerned with nutrition, the female with reproduction. In her anxiety to fulfil her function she becomes as eager as an animal, and "a woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey." She is in the grip of the Life Force, and on its behalf simulates accomplishments, cheats and lies, in order to get the partner so essential to the function of procreation. But the specialization of the sexes has produced not only woman the Mother, but man the Artist. With only a minute part of his energies exhausted by reproductive activities, he becomes creative on the mental plane, and just as the mother reproduces her own ego in the physical child, so does he project his ego in works of art.

The genius, like the mother, is a specialized servant of the Life Force. In his capacity of philosopher he becomes Nature's pilot steering a course onward instead of drifting hither and thither stimulated only by satisfaction of the senses. The philosopher is an instrument of the Life Force which says to him: "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination and choose my path; so I have made a special brain—a philosopher's brain—to grasp this knowledge for me." And later will come the still greater brain of the Superman, and further revolutions still, reaching towards omnipotence and omniscience—the godling striving to become God. The Life Force—the divine protoplasm—is as yet only potentially omniscient and omnipotent; is indeed neither wiser nor more powerful than the wisest man. It is in man making for higher organization, intenser experiences, wider vision, more profound consciousness of its own purpose, and how best it may be achieved. To be in heaven is to serve this purpose,

which transcends our individual fears and greeds and vanities ; to be in hell is to drift after personal pleasure. Affinity with the Life Force gives a man courage to overcome his cowardice and self-seeking, and enrolls him under the banner where fight the soldiers of reality—those who dare to gaze on the face of Truth behind the masks of Illusion.

In his progress man has cast aside many illusions. Once he employed his reproductive powers to gain sensuous pleasure, to satisfy amative passion, as he would any other appetite, with little thought of creation ; and, later, to duplicate himself. Then he invented art, " which is a magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures. You use a glass mirror to see your face ; you use works of art to see your soul." Then he tried Thought, to explore the recesses of his consciousness to find out life's purpose , but, finding the demands of his body a clog on the aspirations of his soul, the future man will aspire to a " direct sense of life." As says the He-Ancient, in the play depicting that future : " Look at me. This is my body, my blood, my brain, but it is not me.....This organism.....is held back from dissolution only by my use of it." The day will come when the tyranny of the body will be shaken off, and there will be no people, but only Thought, for Thought alone is life.

Just as primitive man dispensed with his tail and lived, so will future man aspire to live without a head or a body. The machinery of flesh and blood imprisons life and forbids it to roam among the stars. Even pre-historic man dreamed of an astral body, and demanded to be delivered from the body of this death.

And what is to be the end of it all ? There need be no end. There is no reason why the process should ever stop since it has proceeded so far. But



it must achieve on its infinite way the production of some Being, some Person if you like, who will be strong and wise, with a mind capable of comprehending the whole universe, and with powers capable of executing its entire will; in other words, an omnipotent and benevolent God.<sup>1</sup>

God is, therefore, in front of us and not behind. The god in man, if man is found worthy to remain the temple of the Holy Ghost, will one day become the God in the cosmos. Bernard Shaw has never precisely defined his conception of God. Sometimes God is pictured as in process of evolution coincident with man's own powers—each mutually dependent: God and man are one. Sometimes the Life Force is pictured as impatient with man, threatening to scrap him as his predecessors have been scrapped, when the Life Force will evolve some other organism, "a supersnake or something," to carry on the upward process. Sometimes the creative activity at work before man came is called God, and at other times God can be evolved only in the immeasurably distant future through human and superhuman aspiration. Man is sometimes conceived as being essential to God, and sometimes as non-essential. One certain thing, however, is clear: the Life Force is subject to the limitation of its own lack of powers and wisdom. (Blanco Posnet's affirmation of God's limitations was the main reason for the censorship of the play in which he is the "hero.") One who feels called upon to serve the Life Force is not expected to cringe before it with fear, or to load it with praise as part of the "worship." The Life Force is impersonal, demanding the adherence of those who "share a mysterious purpose to make the world better and wiser, whether the change will benefit them or not."

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Religion* ; 1912.

Anything in art which seems to express this purpose stimulates exaltation and joy.

The following is a brief summary of Bernard Shaw's position:—Life began feebly and blindly as a speck of protoplasm which had within it some kind of a desire for higher organization. By the process of wanting to develop and striving to satisfy its wants, the Life Force succeeded in producing beings, each capable of evolving something higher than itself. Evils such as cancer and other diseases occur not by the will of the Life Force, but because at the time it can do no better. The creative activity, in its ceaseless efforts to organize external nature, at last evolves human beings who are its hands, eyes, and brains. This creative principle is not omnipotent, but needs the conscious help of man to aid it in its work of evolving still higher forms of consciousness, until eventually the Superman appears, who will in turn strive to make possible the Super-Superman, and so on. The Life Force that others call God is something within man. To be religious implies that one has identified one's personal destiny with the efforts of this upward principle, and is willing to be used in its service regardless of the effect upon one's material welfare.

Leaving out of account the validity of the assumption that there is some driving force behind phenomena, and not discussing whether that assumed power should be called God, there is undoubtedly an inspiration in the foregoing conception. The finest men and women, whether they are Christians or non-Christians, feel some urge to visualize the potencies making for a sweeter and saner world. The sum-total of the deepest aspirations of the most profound minds, working towards the realization of intenser and more abundant life for all, might be termed God, if that term had not been associated with so many dubious hypotheses and degrading attributes.

If "God" meant the sum of the aspiring qualities in humanity, as conceived, say, by Comte, we might all fervently worship. But the very use of the term by Humanists, as the example of Comte proved, seems to at once introduce a thousand untenable features into the conception. This also leaves out of account the question of those forces outside a man responsible for the creation or development of the cosmos as a whole. And even the Life Force assumption of Shaw does not include an explanation of God as the First Cause. In 1922, in answer to a series of questions put by the *St. Martin's-in-the-Field Review*, Shaw was obliged to take refuge in the Spencerian position, in spite of the gibes to which he has subjected the "Don't Knowists," as he dubs the Agnostics. One of the questions was:—

Do you believe

- (a) That there must be "somebody behind the something"?
- (b) In a First Cause?
- (c) That the universe made itself, and that our world is a pure accident?

Shaw's reply was as follows:—

(a) No, I believe there is something behind the somebody. All bodies are products of the Life Force (whatever that may be).

(b) A First Cause is a contradiction in terms, because in Causation every cause must have a cause; and therefore there can be no more a First Cause than a first inch in a circle. If you once admit a cause that is uncaused you give up Causation altogether. And if you do that you may as well say that everything makes itself.....and you may as well confess that to your ignorance and limited faculty the universe is unaccountable.

(c) All life is a series of accidents; but when you find most of them pointing all one way you may

guess that there is something behind them that is not accidental.

It will be noticed that Bernard Shaw, in the formulation of his religion, has almost completely thrown over his previous repudiations of Duty, Reason, and Idealism. If we applied the terminology of his *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, we should say the idol-breaker has become the idol-maker. Although, in the 1913 edition, Shaw says he may now see things at a different angle or correlate them with things previously unnoted so that they take on a different aspect, "the book in its old form is as much needed as ever it was." The Will to Live to satisfy oneself, repudiating Duty, scorning Reason, and despising Ideals, has been transformed into the Will to Serve the Life Force and the Will to Understand its purpose. In other words, an Ideal (or, as Shaw calls it, an Idol) has been erected, and personal desires now must give way before the duty of service on its behalf. And since mere will without direction has achieved colossal waste and cruelty, man's understanding or reason must be used to give it guidance. Will is united with reason, and duty with self-realization. Animals with will to live have, through development, achieved excess of this organ or that, and have died as a result of the unwieldiness of this excess, or have been blotted out by the reason and intellect of man functioning in weapons more deadly than their own organs of offence.

The third empire of Ibsen, "where the spirit shall not be unknown, nor the flesh starved, nor the will tortured and baffled," "the empire of Man asserting the validity of his own Will," with Shaw's final thrust of thought, reaches out to a world where the flesh is not starved but eliminated, and not man but the Life Force asserts the validity of its own will.

## CHAPTER X

### THE RELIGION DRAMATIZED

WE will now briefly consider the plays in which the foregoing ideas are dramatized.

*Man and Superman* represents a young woman, Ann Whitefield, as the embodiment of the female principle of the Life Force, seeking to achieve union with the fertilizing element of the male. In other words, Ann requires John Tanner for a husband, and schemes, lies, and exploits her sexual charms to drag him into the net. Tanner sees through her wiles, and, loathing marriage on principle as a trap which curtails the liberties, flees to Spain. Motoring in the Sierra Nevada, he is captured by brigands, and, before Ann eventually hunts him down, has a most remarkable dream. He dreams of himself transformed into Don Juan, the famous libertine, who, being sent to hell, finds himself unutterably bored by its amusements. A lady resembling Ann is ushered in—much to her indignation, as she has always been a pious daughter of the Church. Her father, whom Juan had killed in a duel, and the Devil make up the quartette, who proceed to discuss life in general and the merits of heaven and hell in particular. Heaven is conceived as a place where contemplative speculation on the higher organization of consciousness may be engaged in, free from the illusions of earth or hell. Hell is devoted to artistic and sensuous enjoyments, and its proprietor is the Devil, precisely because with their lures he has tempted men from the service of the Life Force. The Devil argues that men are not interested in life, but in death; for man's art

depicts scenes of slaughter, his science is the stuffing of animal's skins, his religion concentrates on a gibbet. While people are housed in slums as miserable as those of their ancestors of thousands of years ago, and money cannot be found to displace these filthy dens with roomy habitations, their inmates will spend their last penny on a funeral, and the State will bankrupt itself squandering countless millions on the latest instruments of death and destitution.

Juan replies that, so far from man being the blood-thirsty fellow the Devil imagines, he is in reality a coward; he enjoys being called bold and bad. Man gives every excuse save one for his crimes, and that one is cowardice; his abject tameness he calls respectability. And yet these weaklings, who will suffer themselves to be degraded until their very vileness becomes loathsome to their oppressors, can be made brave by simply putting an idea into their heads. "If you can show a man a piece of what he now calls God's work to do, and what he will later call by new names, you can make him entirely reckless of the consequences to himself personally"; and some day men will die gladly, sacrificing liberty and personal ease, in the fight for human perfection.

The dialogue then develops into a discussion of the Life Force. The Life Force, although stupid, has made innumerable experiments in the effort to evolve from its own rawness into higher forms, "the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely, unilludedly self-conscious, in short, a god." The mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and the fleas, and the Fathers of the Church are some of its attempts. The mere sense enjoyments of the lowly evolved are not enough. A complex brain is needed to enable man to help Life to achieve its purpose. Juan explains how Art has enabled man to cultivate his senses

and to feel more deeply, and in his case to lead at last to the worship of woman. "I came to believe that in her voice was all the music of the song, in her face all the beauty of the painting, and in her soul all the emotion of the poem." He projected his aspirations into her personality, mistaking his own visions for her charms, while she kept silent and accepted the glorification. Nay, she simulated accomplishments she never had, in order to make sure of her victim. At last, when the barriers were down, instead of the transports of rapture, instead of intoxication and the more intense glamouring of the mind, the reality was revealed and the disillusionment was complete. The gleam of gold in the dead tooth, the tell-tale resemblance to her mother, anticipating her own appearance thirty years after—her colour, voice, features—were all coldly considered.

I made curious observations of the strange odours of the chemistry of the nerves. The visions of my romantic reveries, in which I had trod the plains of heaven, with a deathless, ageless creature of coral and ivory, deserted me in that supreme hour. I remembered them and desperately strove to recover their illusion, but they now seemed the emptiest of inventions: my judgment was not to be corrupted: my brain said No, on every issue. And while I was in the act of framing my excuses to the lady, Life seized me and threw me into her arms, as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a sea-bird.

The drawbacks of marriage are then assailed by Don Juan. The Life Force regards marriage as a contrivance of its own to secure children and get them cared for. It has become the most licentious of human institutions; men and women now see in it opportunities for enjoying beauty, passion, romance, emotion, without their penalties. The device of sterility has been opposed to the Force of Life by the boldly prudent and the thrifty selfish, while

the stupidly pious rich and the viciously reckless poor are only delaying the extinction of the race by degrading it. We must go back and achieve the advantages of marriage: children, without their drawbacks. The sex relation is not really personal and friendly, any more than is the attitude of a soldier to the enemies of his country. Sex partners are chosen with less care than one would choose a family doctor, for the pair may be almost complete strangers, incompatible in age, colour, and disposition.

Juan asks: "Can a woman serve her country if she refuses to marry any man she does not personally love," any more than a soldier can serve his country by refusing to fight somebody he does not personally hate?

Finally Juan decides to leave hell, with its appeals to mere enjoyments, its pleasurable illusions, to face the realities of heaven. Not that the deeper consciousness which discovers reality under illusion makes for happiness, for "my brain labours at a knowledge which does nothing for me personally, but makes my body bitter to me and my decay and death a calamity. Were I not possessed of a purpose beyond my own, I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher." Though the ploughman eats more, sleeps better, and enjoys his experiences with less misgivings, the urge of the Life Force is behind Don Juan, as it is behind the mother who risks death in giving birth to her child.

As long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization; wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding.

He then, refusing the offer of Dona Ana to accompany



him on the ground that he can find the way to heaven for himself but not for another, departs to that region, to the disgust of the Devil, who delivers a tirade against the Life Force worshippers and their latest craze, the Superman. Upon hearing the Superman is not yet created, Ana also departs, crying to the universe: "I believe in the Life to come. A father, a father for the Superman."

The dreams ends, and John Tanner awakes to find Ann Whitefield on the trail.

Eventually, in spite of his protestations, the Life Force, with some little assistance from Ann, puts his head in the noose, and the play ends with Tanner still fighting in the lost battle for liberty.

This play was intended as a chapter in the Evolutionists' Bible, but being, not without reason, somewhat misunderstood, Bernard Shaw twenty years later made a second attempt to write a new book of Genesis, this time deserting the erotic associations of the romantic libertine for a more familiar theme.

The need for a religion which can be accepted by the thoughtful who have outgrown the traditional faith is now felt more than ever. In *Back to Methuselah* "there is no question of a new religion, but rather of redistilling the eternal spirit of religion and thus extricating it from the sludgy residue of temporalities and legends that make belief impossible, though they are the stock-in-trade of all the Churches and all the schools." As Shaw had seen the old theology, after resisting the attacks of pre-Darwinians, go down like a house of cards before the onslaught of biological theorists, he decided his conception must rest upon biological data. It is unfortunate, however, that, after being strongly influenced by the Weismann hypothesis in writing his first attempt, in his second he swings over to the opposite view, and accepts

the Neo-Lamarckian theory as his basis—a theory which, rightly or wrongly, is being questioned more and more every year. Thus at the outset the new presentation rests upon somewhat shaky foundations.

The belief that the incessant desire to do a thing leads inevitably to its accomplishment allows Shaw to entertain the notion that individual men will some day be able to live for many centuries, permitting of the unfolding of their faculties to a degree impossible in the short life we know to-day.

The period embraced by the five plays in which the idea is expanded reaches from the Garden of Eden to "as far as thought can reach"—a summer afternoon in the year 31,920 A.D.

The first play depicts Adam and Eve, the serpent, and Cain going through their traditional experiences, the legend being treated with considerable artistic and philosophic penetration. Adam is afflicted with the burden of immortality, and wishes to lay it down. This is done by the help of the serpent, who as the result of willing has found a way to replenish the earth with young. The children are born, and after Abel's death Cain glorifies the life of the hunter and fighter as against the humdrum spade-work of his father. Eve applauds woman as the creator and denounces Cain as the destroyer. But Cain says death is not so horrible. It is the gate of another life, splendid and intense, a life of the soul without hunger and fatigue. Eve has visions of the future, of men who will tell beautiful lies in beautiful words—the artists who will dream without sleeping and remember their dreams. She broods on other men who will hear the Voice and will do its bidding; men with hope, who will create things or wisdom, or dream of them. She pictures the time when men will not live by bread alone, but on something else. What she does not know,

but when men live on that, digging and spinning, fighting and killing will be no more.

The next three plays depict how longevity comes to man and increases his powers, until, in the last play, the Ancients, who have achieved Methuselah's duration of life, are exciting the derision of the young. This is a variant on the Dream Scene of *Man and Superman*, for the young prefer music, dancing, and laughter, and ridicule the woebegone visages of the wise. The young are hatched from eggs, and are developed to the flapper stage at birth. At the age of four (comparable to the present fifty) they get sceptical of the delights of the flutes ringing the changes on a few tunes, of making jingles with words, of new dresses, of dancing, of love-making, of eating and sleeping, and they become analytical, taking the world to pieces and rebuilding it afresh. The Ancients, who are centuries old, despise comfort, are immune to the vicissitudes of the weather, and spend their time brooding over the mysteries of being. But the Ancients are not popular with the young hedonists: they are denounced as heartless, loveless, joyless monsters; and in return the Ancients despise, as toys, the music, pictures, statues, flowers, and bright fabrics of the pleasure-seekers.

The artists are introduced. Strephon, a little before, has been upbraiding "The Maiden" for casting him off, consequent upon her growing out of the immature delights of love-making. So now Arjillax, the young sculptor, is reproached by Ecrasia because under her inspiration he once designed beautiful statues, and has now turned to the making of busts of the Ancients. Arjillax registers his disgust with the creation of beautiful objects to feed the mere enjoyment of the sensuously artistic. These things now bore him, and he seeks to depict the intensity of his mind and his aspirations

towards greater things. He exhibits his busts of the Ancients at the Festival. Martellus, the master sculptor, has prepared nothing for exhibition, although he also once had the dream of Arjillax: "I too found one day that my images of loveliness had become vapid, uninteresting, tedious, a waste of time and material." Martellus had made busts of the Ancients, but has smashed them all because he cannot give them life. His disillusion with works of mere beauty is only the beginning of disillusion with images of all sorts. As one's hand grows more skilful so one's soul strives to get nearer to reality, discarding the fleshly lure and making images of the mind. But so noble an inspiration cannot be satisfied with even an image of the truth; and the intellectual conscience, which deserts the fleeting beauty of youth for the eternal in thought, finally revolts against art entirely, because it is false and life alone is true. Arjillax defends his image-making, but Martellus promises to show him living art instead of dead marble.

Pygmalion then comes forward with a dissertation on how biologists have attempted to make living forms. One old document mentions an early experimental biologist who extracted certain unspecified minerals from the earth, made figures, and "breathed into their nostrils the breath of life." Later students in their laboratories in the Silly-Clever Ages measured their salts and gases with the greatest care, but were always short of the ingredient described by the old chronicler as the breath of life, used by that early experimenter who seems to have been the founder of biological science. His name is uncertain, coming down the ages as Jove or Voltaire.

All these synthetic protoplasms were failures, because they would not conduct and fix the vitality called "Life Force." He then introduces an artificial man and a

woman he had made in his laboratory, which he claims are an improvement on the previous attempts.

These figures are Darwinian automata denouncing free will as an illusion, for "we are the Unalterable, the Irresistible, the Irresponsible, the Inevitable." They commence to behave as seems natural to creatures not having been infused with the Shavian Life Force, quarrelling and killing as one might expect from the mere Darwinese creatures they are. They have illusions instead of self-control, and in all respects manifest those traits which Bernard Shaw has taught us to associate with creatures compounded of such vile ingredients! After the female has killed Pygmalion, they are consigned to the dustbin. The Ancients then point out the folly of doll-making even when the dolls are alive. In infancy rag dolls are appreciated; later stone dolls called statues are gushed about. Stories are made about imaginary dolls or people who dress up as dolls and act plays. Doll-making is declared to be the noblest work of art. But, later still, living dolls made of flesh and blood are desired, until the abominations of Pygmalion show not only the childishness of image-making, but its horror as well.

The Ancients go on to describe how they passed through the stage of infancy, through the making of rag dolls and marble images, until dead beauty repelled them and they turned to the moulding of living flesh. By willing they created huge muscles on their arms, and presently a dozen legs, four heads, eight eyes, and a hundred fingers. But it dawned upon them that this monstrous creation of legs and heads was so much cumbersome machinery that had been enslaved. And, finally, comes the consciousness that nothing is worth creating except Thought, and the Ancients are depicted as reaching out in aspiration to existence without the

trammels of the body, which at its death drags them also to extinction—to a time when there will be no people in the universe, but only Thought, which will then be life eternal. The play ends with the appearance of Lilith, the first mythical personification of the Life Force, who reviews the past experiments which have been made, broods over the malice and destructiveness of the early stages of humanity, and notes the final aspiration of men, who, “after passing a million goals,” “press on to the redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence that when the world began was a whirlpool in pure force.” Though all this progress seems but a beginning in the infinite work of creation, yet Lilith decides not yet to supersede humanity, but to wait until the last stream between flesh and spirit has been forded, and life has been disentangled from the matter that always mocked it. In enslaving matter, the enemy of life, matter became the master; but the slave shall be set free to fuse with Lilith, who in turn will be superseded. Life, or Thought, will then progress until matter is finally dominated completely, to the uttermost confines of space. But Life will still evolve towards inscrutable goals that can never be reached.

## CHAPTER XI

### SUPERMANIACAL EUGENICS

BERNARD SHAW's first attempt to dramatize his religious faith was based on the assumption that "the bubble of Heredity has been pricked; the certainty that acquirements are negligible as elements in practical heredity has demolished the hopes of the educationists as well as the terrors of the degeneracy-mongers."<sup>1</sup>

The second attempt completely reverses the above assumption, and the Weismann school is trounced in most contemptuous terms, while inherited acquirements, instead of being negligible, are now stated to be of overwhelming importance—a man, for example, being regarded as only an amoeba with acquirements!<sup>2</sup>

The discovery that Weismann and his supporters had attempted to demonstrate their theory by surgical operations upon animals seems to be the chief reason for the complete change of front; but no reference is made to this alteration of opinion by Shaw, serious as the consequences are to his views of evolution.

On the question of vivisection Shaw is almost insane. He is not satisfied to inquire whether the sufferings of animals experimented upon in the interests of knowledge are more than compensated for by the tremendously greater alleviation of human pain. Whatever the benefits to humanity may be, he contends we have no right to obtain them at the expense of helpless animals.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Man and Superman*.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Back to Methuselah*.

The Devil's warning in his own play seems apposite in this connection: "Beware of the pursuit of the Superhuman: it leads to an indiscriminate contempt for the Human."

In both his accounts of man and his civilization Shaw's attitude is sombre. Man as he is seems hopeless. The second account complains of the cruelty of Natural Selection; the first is equally bitter, because, through cowardice, we defeat its operations under cover of philanthropy.

The remedy in the first account dismisses religion and advocates selective breeding; in the second account religion, as a stimulus to the will to evolve a better race, alone is stressed, selection being apparently dropped.

We will now consider the constructive proposals contained in *Man and Superman* for the breeding of the Supermen from whom God is eventually to be evolved.

The indictment against man and his attempts at civilization, and the Eugenic remedies, are contained in *The Revolutionists' Handbook*, supposed to have been written by John Tanner, the Anarchistic hero of *Man and Superman*. How far may the views of Tanner be taken to represent those of his creator? This question is important. When the play was originally produced Tanner was made up to duplicate Shaw in personal appearance. But Dr. Henderson, Shaw's biographer, claims that Tanner is intended to represent the late H. M. Hyndman. If so, the character is badly drawn.

Tanner in the play, and Don Juan his refined *alter ego* in the dream, voice all Shaw's familiar views. It is only in the *Handbook* that one is uncertain. That Shaw does not want to be fully committed to his hero's views is shown by the stage description of Tanner:—

He is prodigiously fluent of speech, restless, excitable (mark the snorting nostril and the restless blue eye, just the thirty-secondth of an inch too wide



open), possibly a little mad.....A sensitive, susceptible, exaggerative, earnest man; a megalomaniac, who would be lost without a sense of humour.

Don Juan is described as being more critical than Tanner, without his impetuous credulity, enthusiasm, and modern plutocratic vulgarity, but with a resemblance to him amounting to "even an identity."

Every literary artist who aims at supplying thoughts as well as sugar-candy to the world finds his mind teeming with ideas so stimulating as to call for verbal expression. But some of them he only half accepts as really valid. They are what Spencer called pseud-ideas—the poor relations of the family. The author wishes these notions to have a chance of getting discussed in the hope, possibly, of being thus able to arrive at a more definite personal estimate of their value. Also, the act of expressing them forces a clearer examination, and places them in more complete relationship to the rest of his conceptions. Some of these ideas were once held vigorously, but are later partly outgrown; with their roots, however, still left embedded in the mental soil. They represent, maybe, a previous phase of development, being comparable to one's younger brother. Now Shaw has several of these younger brothers. They are *enfant terribles*, delighting to shock the old-fashioned people who wriggle in their discomfiture. The typical Shavian "hero" is a "younger brother" of Bernard Shaw. He was known to the press of thirty or forty years ago as G. B. S. Shaw is rather tired of him now, and he is allowed to perform only when some special work suitable to his proclivities needs to be done. Young Shaw, the *enfant terrible*, appears in the plays as Dick Dudgeon, the Devil's disciple; as Valentine in *You Never can Tell* and as Higgins, the teacher of phonetics, in *Pygmalion*.

John Tanner is essentially a "younger brother,"

whose views Shaw sympathizes with like a naughty uncle sympathizes with the audacious nephew who is the terror of his maiden aunts. He thinks these views should be expressed, but does not care to stamp them with full official authority as registering his matured opinion. They are probably ratified in certain moods and doubted in others. Generally speaking, even the views in the *Handbook* may be taken as those of Shaw himself in his more Anarchistic moments. Tanner, as a whole, is very reminiscent of the days of "G. B. S.," the irresponsible swashbuckler who butchered opponents to make a Fabian holiday.

Tanner's view of woman as the huntress laying traps for her matrimonial victim is fully shared by Shaw, who maintains that Shakespeare's plays demonstrate that the bard also held a similar opinion.

It has been objected that the motive which Shaw stresses in *Man and Superman* to account for Ann Whitefield (who is Everywoman) chasing Tanner—namely, the reproductive instinct which he calls the "Life Force"—is overdone. The economic factor, it has been urged, is much more important. Certainly, in representing the maternal instinct as the motive for the cajoleries of women, Shaw has deserted the view portrayed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, where undue insistence is laid upon the factor of poverty as the urge behind the hunting of men by women. The truth is between the two positions. Women require a male partner partly because they need sustenance and economic security for life, and partly because they need that emotional expression bound up with the sexual and reproductive instincts—the two latter, by the way, being by no means synonymous.

But in the business-like handling of her matrimonial affairs Violet Robinson, in the same play, demonstrates the keenness of vision in respect to what is called the

"main chance" of a Shavian woman. One scarcely knows which of the women, Ann or Violet, is the more distasteful—the one in the grip of the "Life Force," or the other in the grip of the Gold Bug. Their creator, however, seems to love them both!

On the whole, *Man and Superman* may be taken as a phase in Shaw's development when the economic factor had lost its potency and the biological factor loomed supreme. But Socialism was not rejected as some writers have contended. In the *Revolutionist's Handbook* Socialism is dismissed, along with education and religion, as being inadequate to solve our problems. But in the Preface it is stated: "There is no future for men, however brimming with crude vitality, who are neither intelligent nor politically educated enough to be Socialists." The rebound from biology to economics is seen in 1905 in *Major Barbara*, in the exaggerated vehemence of Shaw's denunciation of poverty, which he here contends is, more than men's weaknesses, responsible for the world's evils..

In 1901-3 Shaw's faith in the political and economic methods of improving mankind was at a low ebb. The Eugenists were just getting a grip on the minds of thoughtful men with their recital of the facts of racial degeneracy; the Boer War had illustrated the incompetency in high places which every national crisis brings to light; and the lack of will on the part of the governed to regard the affairs of the nation as comparable in importance to a football match forced on him once again the drawbacks of man as he is. His faith in democracy, never very robust, seemed to die entirely. The present importance of the Labour Party, organized in 1902, could not then be foretold, for at that time the working classes had only about a dozen members of Parliament out of 670. Democracy, to be successful, says Shaw,

depends upon a whole population of capable voters possessing vision and character to which enlightened statesmen may appeal. But we have no such voters. Promiscuous breeding has produced a weakness of character too timid to face the full rigours of a competitive struggle, and too idle and petty to work for a co-operative commonwealth.

In spite of all our reforms, our education and religion, all our boasted progress is a mere illusion. Neither morally nor in other things are we ahead of our ancestors of thousands of years ago. Several pages of illustrations of our alleged decadence are given, and progress is dismissed as an idle fancy.

Since man, as he is, is a failure with insurmountable defects of mind and character, and since the hope of reformers in increased education has been dissipated by the new discoveries in heredity, which show that the child must commence where his father begun and not where he left off, the only solution of our difficulties is to breed a new race. If the Superman is to be achieved, it must be as the result of man's conscious contrivance. The accidents which have evolved man cannot be trusted to evolve the Superman: the process, besides being doubtful in its results, is far too costly.

Socialism will never win favour as a result of the demonstrations of its justice, but only when it is seen that property conflicts with the race biologically considered. "Ye must be born again," and born different, is the cry of the new reformer. The old god who helped those who could not help themselves—the god of the lazy and incapable—must be dropped, and man must become the political Providence doing the work he used to shirk with an idle prayer. The transformation of institutions, which is the substitute for progress, is merely a change from Tweedledum to Tweedledee; but the

changes of the wolf and fox to the domestic dog are real and profound. What can be done with dogs, by the selection of certain points to be improved by breeding, can be done with men. We must breed the Superman. In breeding dogs, roses, and fruits we know what we want, but we are not agreed upon the qualities requisite in our ideal man. Still, this is not an insurmountable difficulty; there is some generalized agreement upon what are desirable qualities, and the hero-worshipping tendencies have shown that aspirations in given directions are operative in the mind of man. In any case, even at its worst, by the old method of trial and error we shall finally produce the Superman. No complete specification of requirements was given before a man improved the breed of his vegetables and fruits, his animals and birds. One thing is certain - the heart and mind of humanity must be changed. Man must will his own improvement if the race is not to perish; he must will to be healthy and wealthy. Much conventional morality will pass with or before the coming of the Superman. Survival lies with those who are capable of social aspiration, and of self-control of those appetites making for extinction. The weedy may be encouraged to marry the weedy rather than to contaminate sounder stock. In time they will disappear as a result of their own aggravated decadence. This is more costly than sterilization would be, but it has the advantage of allowing us to make corrections as the result of experience in the event of errors being made in our estimates of fitness.

Besides the lack of will of mankind regarding his own improvement there are several obstacles in the way: the two chief are marriage and private property. After all efforts have been made to prevent undesirables from mating with those of sounder stock, and after all

encouragements have operated to persuade the better types to unite, personal fancy will still, as before, perform the chief work of bringing the couples together. It is essential that the field of choice should be as wide as possible, instead of being restricted to marriage within the clique. To-day, with negligible exceptions, the prospective parents are restricted to partners chosen from a small circle composed of members of their own social standing. But it is very probable that the children of parents who are incompatible in temperament, outlook, and social position would be of a very desirable type. To-day property barriers prevent the members of the various classes from interbreeding, and disastrous results follow from this principle of endogamy. Equality is needed to remove these barriers. But even when the property disqualifications have been removed the life-long unions presupposed by monogamic marriage would prove insurmountable to a high-spirited Jewess of an artistic disposition who wished to have the advantage of being fertilized by a robust country squire. He would supply the physical stamina needed in the child, while she could supply the intellectual equipment. But if she had to spend a lifetime in the father's society, listening to his conversation about the stable and the hunting field and being continually offended by the grossness of his habits, while he in turn is perplexed and irritated by her complex and sensitive temperament, the desirable traits in the child would be purchased by the life-long misery of the parents. Fecundation alone is needed, and can be secured without cohabitation. Both property and marriage stand in the way of the Superman.

Prudery, which prevents the most important question of life from being discussed, is largely the outcome of squalor. In crowded populations, especially among the poor, real cleanliness cannot be observed. Natural con-

ditions are interfered with until people are obliged to keep half their bodily life a guilty secret, to be mentioned to the doctor only in cases of emergency. In addition, through ignorance, sex relations cannot be discussed by nine-tenths of the population without the use of terms that would shock the rest. The result is that a taboo of silence is placed upon the subject, and we blunder in our ignorance into disease and degeneracy, which might be avoided if knowledge were placed within the reach of all.

To demonstrate the practicability of race culture in the absence of marriage and private property, the Perfectionist Experiment at Oneida Creek is explained. In 1848, under the leadership of Noyes, described as a chance experiment of the Superman, a society was established in America on communistic and "Free Love" lines. For thirty years it was successful, producing healthier children than the average, until through age Noyes found his physical powers on the wane. He then advised his following, composed of three hundred people, to adopt monogamic marriage and capitalism, knowing that the success so far had been largely achieved as a result of his Supermanic leadership.

Marriage as an institution will have to go. Elsewhere Shaw has denounced "love" as a "transient and exhausting" thing, and has demanded that young people should be informed that "what they call love is an appetite" which, like any other appetite, will disappear on indulgence; and they should not be permitted to make vows of life-long fidelity under its fleeting influence.

People are to be encouraged to become parents without a life-long partnership being obligatory; and these partnerships will grow until, when the super-race finally arrives, we shall have only here and there a Darby and Joan to remind us of the old-fashioned conception of domesticity.

On the other hand, so-called Free Love is strongly condemned. Conjugation for the mere purpose of sexual satisfaction, either inside or outside wedlock, is loathed by Shaw.

The partners for the eugenic marriages—namely, those who enter voluntarily into temporary arrangements made without a wedding ceremony and for the purpose of bearing children (the only justification for any kind of a marriage to Bernard Shaw), will have free choice without any kind of communal compulsion.

Shaw is not consistent on the question of love, for he has stated we must trust "the power behind evolution working with the purpose of making something better." And in 1913, at the City Temple, he said that what is known as the act of "falling in love" is an instinctive direction of the "divine spark," and the safest clue to the problem of breeding the Superman. When two people fall in love the Eugenist has his cue.<sup>1</sup>

The *Handbook* proceeds to discuss how the State has interfered in the matrimonial arrangements of its members. In the case of the monarchs, marriages have been arranged on political grounds between people who have scarcely met each other; and soldiers' marriages are despotically controlled in the interests of efficiency. A system of endowments of motherhood is urged, for "if a woman can, by careful selection of a father and nourishment of herself, produce a citizen with efficient senses, sound organs, and a good digestion, she should clearly be secured a sufficient reward for that natural service to make her willing to undertake and repeat it." It does not matter whether she is financed by the Government, the father, or a speculative capitalist, so long as the results are satisfactory!

<sup>1</sup> See J. McCabe's *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 124.



Somehow a new race must be evolved. Orthodox methods have failed. Man as he is will never add a cubit to his stature "by any of his quackeries—political, scientific, educational, religious, or artistic." Man must be replaced by the Superman—by a whole democracy of Supermen: "For until there is an England in which every man is a Cromwell, a France in which every man is a Napoleon, a Rome in which every man is a Cæsar, a Germany in which every man is a Luther plus a Goethe, the world will be no more improved by its heroes than a Brixton villa is improved by the pyramid of Cheops."

Even Socialism is a dream when confined to the public ownership and control of production and exchange. "The only fundamental and possible Socialism is the socialization of the selective breeding of man."

And finally, says Shaw-Tanner, there is no enthusiast alive having had twenty years of practical experience of democracy who believes in its political adequacy. To-day it is not the king who rules, but the tinker; and statesmen, instead of having to flatter and cajole one king as in the past, have now to adapt themselves to the prejudices of a king with a million heads—King Demos. But the tinker and his children are riff-raff; and to hand the country over to riff-raff, who can neither govern nor allow anybody else to govern who will not become a mountebank and offer bread and circuses, amounts to national suicide.

In commenting upon the foregoing it may be said that there is a considerable amount of truth in the indictment directed against modern man. But when a comparison is made with past societies, and progress is denounced as a complete illusion, the very illustrations given demonstrate the feebleness of the contention. A long list of isolated cases is tabulated, ranging from the dis-

covery of a flogging club among the officers in a crack regiment to the use of the holy water we call disinfectant fluid, which are supposed to demonstrate that no advance has been made.

Against the trivialities in Shaw's indictment (for, although it occurs in Tanner's *Handbook*, it is ratified in Shaw's Preface) a few instances of past horrors may be listed which have no parallels to-day. Human sacrifice in religious ceremonies; the slaughter of prisoners of war; the wholesale raping of women in a captured city; the torturing of prisoners to obtain evidence; the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition; witch-burning; the flogging of lunatics, of soldiers, of women in prison; mutilations and capital punishment for trivial crimes; the wholesale epidemics of the Middle Ages due to filth and microbic infection; the long hours and low wages of a century ago (children of six and seven being worked to death in factory hells); chattel slavery; the wholesale drunkenness among the upper classes so prevalent in the eighteenth century—all these have gone, let us hope for ever, among civilized peoples.

To-day it may be truthfully said that the death rate is lower than ever before recorded. People live longer, children are better treated, women have more real liberty, and workmen have shorter hours and higher pay, than in any previous century of the world's history. Our prisons are more humanely conducted; our schools are more enlightened; we read more, travel more, eat more good food, live in better houses; have access to art galleries, theatres, museums, and other places of improvement and amusement more than at any period of human civilization. Our lively consciousness of present-day evils is not owing to their increase, but rather to a heightened sensitiveness due to the development of social sympathy in the minds of all.

Where Shaw has a case, if he cares to stress it, is not in respect to customs or social conditions, but in regard to the biological equipment of modern man. Recorded insanity has increased very noticeably, and there is an appalling mass of physical unfitness being steadily added to year by year. Although germ-caused diseases have lessened, certain diseases, as cancer and defects of such organs as the heart, are on the increase, while the pronounced neurotic instability of large numbers of people provides serious thought for the students of civilization.

It would be worth considering also how far the lavish doles, grants, and pensions of modern times help to endow all kinds of organic unfitness and incapacity, enabling types to survive and rear defective progeny when, without such help, extinction would be the result.

The rejection of sterilization for certain decadent types, who instead are to be encouraged to intermarry, is bad eugenics. The study of the Jukes family, the Zeros, the descendants of Ben Ishmael, and the rest of the large amount of data now available regarding the vicious results of uninterrupted fecundity among the degenerate, show how necessary it is to apply certain restrictions upon the reproductive activities of undesirable types.

Endowment of the mothers of healthy children might be good ; but the modern method of penalizing the healthy stock found in the professional and upper classes of society by heavy taxation, which delays marriage and limits children among the middle class, in order to enable slummites to escape most of their parental obligations in respect to food, education, doctoring, etc., through the provision made by Government and the municipality, is making for racial deterioration instead of the opposite.

Further, the opposition of Shaw to birth control is old-fashioned and absurd. Education is far more needed

to enable workers to limit their families to their incomes than any form of endowment to increase the supply of children. Enough children are being born; in fact, too many. What is wanted is quality instead of quantity. To train up a few people to feel their responsibilities in the matter of healthy children is not enough if the rest of the nation is allowed to usher children into the world, the responsibility for whom is discharged by the more capable members of society. This penalizes capacity and endows incapacity, and along those lines ruin lies. Indeed, this method is largely responsible for the development of much of the unfitness we have to deplore. And if democracy grows in strength, power, and rapacity faster than it does in knowledge and a sense of social responsibility, the result is a foregone conclusion.

It may be said, in concluding these brief remarks arising from a consideration of Shaw's views of the breeding of the Superman, that our first business is to prevent the breeding of the Subterman. To restrict the procreative activities of certain types by sterilization and segregation is more practicable and beneficial than to engage in dreams of endowment of Supermaniacs whose children are to populate the globe. The prospective fathers and mothers of the Superchildren are at present too busy finding the cash to pay for the upbringing of the Subterchildren, or, as Tanner elegantly describes them, the riff-raff, to have much energy left to devote to a large family of their own.

Still, it is encouraging to notice that one Socialist at least has recognized that we must rationalize the man supply as well as nationalize the coal supply, however much we regret that he has elsewhere pithed his own proposals by demanding an equality of income for every man, woman, and child, irrespective of their worth to the community.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ARTISTIC BIBLE

**IF** we are to have a religion, we shall need a Bible. What sort of a Bible is Bernard Shaw prepared to recommend? And what has he to say about the orthodox Scriptures?

Shaw deals with these questions chiefly in the Prefaces entitled "Parents and Children" (1914) and "The Infidel Half-Century" (1921); but the subject is referred to in many other places.

To understand his views on the Bible or religion, it is necessary to understand his views on art, which in turn are linked up with his views on life.

The references to art in the previous Chapters prepare a reader unacquainted with all Shaw's works to expect his attitude will be that of the Puritan, who conceives operatic music, undraped statues, and paintings of nude figures as the works of the devil.

Indeed, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his book, regards Shaw as much a Puritan as a Progressive. Shaw, although an ascetic, is the very opposite to a Puritan. At times, indeed, he elevates art to the dignity of a religion. Only by the fine arts can we get educated in body and soul, or can the history of the past live for us, or the hope of the future shine for us. Art "is the appointed vehicle of inspiration and the method of the communion of saints," and "alone can give delicacy and nobility to our crude lusts." The Puritans believed that art stimulated our lusts instead of glorifying them.

In spite of the apparent censure of art found elsewhere, Shaw is saturated with the best that has been produced in the way of music, painting, literature, and the drama. In his early years it was his business to appraise these arts, and he has a profound knowledge of their technique and very definite views as to their function. He has much in common with Tolstoy, regarding "art for art's sake" as contemptible as eating for the sake of eating, or sexual expression for the sake of gratifying mere lust. Art must be didactic, or it is no more art than sweet-meats are food or lust is love. "For art's sake alone," he writes in the Preface to *Man and Superman*, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." In the famous reply to Max Nordau, entitled *The Sanity of Art*, Shaw states very precisely what he regards as its functions. Art must cultivate and refine our senses until their operations become highly critical acts, which protest against ugliness, noise, discordant speech, impure air, or anything inimical to a cultured life. Art has also a moral purpose. It must "refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity." The worthy artist cultivates our moral and physical senses by feeding them with those creations which call the finer emotions and nobler faculties into enjoyable activity. The finest artists go beyond the demand, and by supplying unfamiliar works of deeper insight add an extension of culture to the heritage of the race.

That Shaw understands the attitude of the conventional mind in respect to the function of art as a vehicle of amusement to relieve our minds from the pressure of undue preoccupation with dull reality is shown by the

speech he puts into the mouth of Johnny Tarleton in *Misalliance*.

Art, to Shaw, is practically synonymous with religion as he understands it, for what produces the poems and pictures, the music and scriptures, is the struggle of the Life Force to become divinely conscious of itself, instead of blundering along down the line of least resistance. The supreme artists are men of genius who have been selected by Nature to build up this intellectual consciousness of her instinctive purpose to guide lesser men along the main path of evolution. The artist worthy of the name must therefore be a philosopher or a prophet, lighting up the darkness and stimulating the aspirations of mankind. In other words, the artist-prophet must be a religious teacher instead of a mere confectioner who is satisfied in pandering to men's appetites.

This attitude of Shaw forces him to look for a message in all books, music, and paintings. If he finds none, he denies the right of the author, the musician, or painter to be considered seriously, however technically proficient he may be, or however high his reputation. Many times Shaw reads his own message into the work he examines, and Ibsen, Wagner, Jesus, Beethoven, etc., are accordingly credited with conceptions which, if known, would probably have astonished them. Michael Angelo is applauded for painting the Superman three hundred years before Nietzsche wrote about him or Strauss set the idea to music. "Beethoven never heard of radio-activity, nor of electrons dancing in vortices of inconceivable energy," yet the last movement of one of his sonatas is acclaimed as a musical picture of these whirling electrons!

On the other hand, Shakespeare is denied a place in the Pantheon, because he has no religious conception shining through his plays. Tolstoy criticized his work (*Romeo and Juliet*, etc.) because it did not teach the

brotherhood of man, Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Dickens's *Christmas Carol* being praised as worthy examples of what art could do in that direction. But Shaw will accept neither Dickens nor Shakespeare as an artist-philosopher, for their observations on life are not co-ordinated into philosophy or religion. "In all their fictions there is no leading thought or inspiration for which man could conceivably risk the spoiling of his hat in a shower, much less his life." Shakespeare's philosophers have no philosophy to expound. They are merely pessimists, who prove that Shakespeare had just enough religion "to be aware that his religiousless condition was one of despair."

Art is either religious or it is dead. And "fine art is the only teacher except torture." Yet millions of families, both rich and poor, know next to nothing of art. Although prayers are offered up to their Creator, he is convicted of indecency every day. An undraped human body, which to an artist is, at its best, the most admirable spectacle in Nature, is denounced as monstrous and obscene by the morbid people whose minds and senses have been deprived of the refining discipline of art. Actually, our most dangerous appetites and propensities are inflamed by the starvation imposed by lack of art. Uncultivated people malignantly hate high and noble qualities, while the really cultured are chilled by coarseness and vulgarity. Parents, solicitous about the morals of their son, deny him access to Venus of Milo, to find him later in the arms of the scullery-maid. Not a single passion is stifled nor a single danger averted by this starving of the soul which art would feed. Children especially should be surrounded with art, so that they may discover which branch of it will give them delight. The pleasures and emotions of art will have to satisfy in a sublimated form those cravings which, if repressed,



would become morbid, and seek satisfactions calculated to destroy the stamina of the race. Satisfied poetically, all is well. But the most dangerous form of art is that which is designed to evoke religious ecstasy,<sup>1</sup> and *Treasure Island*, Byron's *Don Juan*, or Dickens's *Pickwick* is far more beneficial to the boy or girl than the *Imitation of Christ*. Both children and adults must have access to the whole body of fine art. To hope to find it purified from all that is dangerous, obsolete, fierce, or lusty, or to attempt to pick and choose for the young, is neither possible nor desirable. We must get in touch with the stories, pictures, songs, and plays which appeal to our sense of enjoyment. We shall not enjoy those which bring no message; and even if evil is presented, it is necessary to come across it, for "ignorance of evil is not virtue, but imbecility."

Shaw's view of art, therefore, is not the Puritan's. We must regard art as one of the finest possible means of enjoyment and as an indispensable adjunct of moral instruction. Indeed, art is the only moral instructor. Art, to fulfil its true function, must not only minister to the palate like a sweetmeat, but must nourish the soul like a food. That form of art which aims at mere enjoyment without upliftment, and that which aims at upliftment without enjoyment, are alike despised in Shaw's general philosophy, in spite of minor departures from the rule. *Man and Superman*, with its too heavy burden of ideas, was written largely as a challenge to the convention that the theatre was the place where people go to be soothed and amused after the strain of the day's work. But that Shaw does not object to the jam of amusement being used to convey the pill of philosophy

<sup>1</sup> Why, then, recommend the Bible for children? See references later in this Chapter.

is amply demonstrated by his own plays, in which at times the humour is almost riotous.

He protests against the notion that pleasure and sin are synonymous terms, or that a high sense of religious zeal is necessarily associated with a long face.

Art should be the vehicle of both religion and education. Here we strike another of Shaw's inconsistencies. We must not attempt to teach children political science and citizenship, nor apparently anything else, for "what is certain is that if you teach a man anything he will never learn it."<sup>1</sup> Yet on the same page Shaw says our schools teach the morality of feudalism corrupted by commercialism, etc., and so well are the lessons learnt that the educated man becomes a bigger nuisance than the uneducated, because of his opposition to progress! He speaks also of the prophets who see through the imposture, teaching individuals and converting them to the opposite view. And again he refers to the "diabolical efficiency of technical education" and the remarkable way in which the soldier is trained to fly, drop bombs, and discharge guns.

Shaw complains of the complete absence of art in our school books, and contends that nothing can be taught without art. Yet the books dealing with the technical education, which is so diabolically efficient, are no more artistic than any other book in use in the schools. Shaw has lapses!

In spite of the impossibility of anything taught being ever learnt, elsewhere he says: "Children must be taught some sort of a religion."<sup>2</sup> Secular education is hopeless, for it teaches that "the only reason for ceasing to do evil and learning to do well is that if you do not

<sup>1</sup> Preface on "The Infidel Half-Century," p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Preface on "Parents and Children."

you will be caned." This permits the child to say to itself: "Yes, if I am found out; but wait until your back is turned, and I will do as I like, and lie about it." The Secularist who is not a fool is obliged, therefore, to appeal to the child's impulse to perfection, which means a religious appeal has been made, however much theological references to the divine spark, the will of God, etc., are repudiated. It is of no use telling a child to suspend its judgment until it is old enough to choose a religion. A conscience and a code of honour, which are the essence of religion, are needed, if only provisionally, or you have nothing to appeal to. The appetite for perfection must be cultivated by art, and no child can stand moral instruction books which state the case for religion in abstract terms. This rules out Moral Instruction Leagues and similar bodies. Shaw pities both the unfortunate children of Sceptics<sup>1</sup> who have Ethical tracts of deadly dullness put into their hands and the wretched infants who are compelled to listen to fearfully long discourses of Secularist lecturers, which bore them stiff. Thus the Bible must be utilized because children enjoy incredible stories like Jonah and the Whale. As an example of moralizing art, Shaw exults the story of Elisha and the bears: "It is obviously not true as a record of fact; and the picture it gives us of the temper of God (which is what interests an adult reader) is shocking and blasphemous. But it is a capital story for a child." It interests the children because it is about bears, and leaves them with the impression that it is naughty to poke fun at a bald-headed gentleman, for, while the adult always blames God, the infant always

<sup>1</sup> The people banish the Bible from their homes, and yet, strangely, Shaw tells us that only Freethinkers and reluctant parsons now read the Bible. Presumably the Freethinkers all adjourn to the Free Library to do it!

criticizes the children. To say little about the advisability of telling children incredible, shocking, and blasphemous stories about the bad temper of God, this story violates all that Shaw has taught about the wickedness of revenge. Here revenge is portrayed and, according to Shaw, made justifiable in the mind of the child—a complete violation of his whole teaching.

All he says on this subject is perverse, and is based upon ignorance. The books issued in connection with the Moral Instruction Movement do not state religion and morality in abstract terms, nor do they use a catechism as Shaw asserts. Any one who is acquainted with the work of F. J. Gould, who has compiled most of the books in use, knows that the moral lessons are inculcated by means of thousands of stories which incidentally are neither shocking nor blasphemous and vindictive, as is the story of Elisha. Again, I have attended some hundreds of meetings addressed by Secularist lecturers, but I have never yet observed those unfortunate children pitied by Mr. Shaw. Children in the schools where theology is barred are instructed from some of the books which Shaw has applauded—*Les Misérables*, *Ivanhoe*, and *Treasure Island*; and the works of Dickens, Jack London, and other favourites are constantly in use. As for secular education implying that the only reason for goodness is the cane, failing which one is obliged to introduce religion by an appeal to the conscience, I suggest that Mr. Shaw first gets acquainted with the method of Mr. Gould, or any other representative believer in moral instruction devoid of theology, before he pens further nonsense on the subject. The appeal is made all the time to the potential justice, kindness, and decency in the child—what Shaw calls the appetite for perfection—and threats of punishment never come within the region of consciousness. To monopolize the appeals

to decency in the name of religion is to commit the crime Shaw despises in the "unco guid," who are in the habit of imagining an Atheist is necessarily a rogue.

Of course, with Shaw's definition of the word "religion" as a "belief which affects conduct," everything you can possibly teach becomes religious. It is religious to give a chemistry lesson on the effects of alcohol, or instruction concerning the habits of birds, for both may affect the conduct of the child: he may grow up a teetotaler, or start collecting eggs as a result of the inspiration.

By secular education is meant, by any one outside a lunatic asylum, except Mr. Shaw, education without the use of the Bible. And the education may and should include appeals to the "impulse for perfection," in which non-Christians believe as firmly as Christians; which Shaw himself has admitted—sometimes with embarrassing emphasis.

Shaw as a defender of Bible instruction is a dubious acquisition to those who oppose secular education, for, although the Authorized Version is stated to be a great work of art and "not a bad story book," "some of the stories are horrible." And in any case, "except for people steeped in the Bible from childhood like Sir Walter Scott and Ruskin," its Elizabethan English is "a dead language." What use a dead language is, especially to people who cannot understand it, only Mr. Shaw can tell us. And as he further contends that the Bible inculcates half-a-dozen different religions, some of them barbarous, some cynical and pessimistic, and none suited to the character and conditions of Western civilization unless it was that finally suppressed by the Crucifixion, and which has never been practised before or since, one scarcely understands Shaw's insistence upon its use in schools.

Even Shaw later has his doubts, for in the *Back to*

*Methuselah* Preface we are warned of the dangers of treating its legends as the truth: "If you teach the Garden of Eden myth or the story of Noah's Ark as true to a boy, later, roused by the gibes of his matés, he will find out what every candid prelate has to admit, and religion as a whole will be discovered as a fraud and parsons denounced as hypocrites and liars." Shaw goes on to say we cannot leave education in the hands of people who teach that the Bible is either accurate history or science, or a complete guide to conduct. People want stories of miracles, saints, martyrs, Judases, and devils to provide objects of wonder and worship, and somebody to get angry with. These legends are the heritage of the race.

There is only one inexorable condition attached to their healthy enjoyment, which is that nobody shall believe them literally.

People are turning away from the Bible because the imposition of its legends as literal truths "at once changes them from parables into falsehoods."

In any case, Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is truer and more edifying than the Psalms, even if less comforting to the distressed, and the ignoble irrelevance of God's retort which closes the book of Job cannot be disguised by the pleasure we get from its rhetoric. "There is nothing in the Bible greater in inspiration than Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*," and the power of modern music to supply that inspiration to a modern man is far greater than is possible through the mediumship of the dead language in which the Bible is written. Why, then, does Shaw continually attack Ethicists and Rationalists, who insist strongly upon the uplifting powers of music in preference to Biblical instruction, and at South Place and elsewhere provide every week some of the finest music available?

He recognizes at last that the orthodox Scriptures are not sufficient for the religion of Creative Evolution. We must utilize what might be called the synthetic Bible, which has among its major prophets men like Ibsen, Wagner, and Beethoven.

Included in the synthetic Bible to which the Creative Evolutionists must go for inspiration are Shelley's *Prometheus*, Wagner's *Niblung's Ring*, Mozart's *Magic Flute*, and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, all of which are projections towards the new Vitalist art that is to saturate the world.

The new religion will need its body of parables and legends like the old. All the nations must pool their myths to make a delightful stock of folklore to be used by the religions of all mankind. They must be accepted as the fictions they are, instead of being foisted upon the world as authentic descriptions of actual events. Neither religion nor morality can live without its legends, poems, plays, and novels, "for all the sweetness of religion is conveyed to the world by the hands of story-tellers and image-makers."<sup>1</sup> Without these fictions the truths of religion cannot be made intelligible or apprehensible to the multitude.

Art of all kinds, then, must be the vehicle of religion, and it is never great unless performing this function. "Italian painting from Giotto to Carpaccio is all religious painting," and it moves us deeply as a result. But the glory departs from the art when the religion of which it is the iconography has become a superstition, as is the case to-day. The revival of religion on a scientific basis, stated in terms of Creative Evolution which the up-to-date thinker may accept without provisos, will mean a glorious re-birth of art.

<sup>1</sup> Image-smashers were applauded as the salt of the earth in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.

Shaw then comes forward to take his place as an art prophet of the new dispensation. After dealing with a variety of sociological subjects in his plays, he at last fulfils his natural function as artistic interpreter of the religion of his day. *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* represent Shaw's contribution to the Creative Evolutionist's Bible—the Genesis in which the Garden of Eden is weeded of its noxious growths.

The ancient Greeks had their drama, in which the current views of religion were depicted; and the Middle Ages had their Mystery and Miracle plays, reverently portraying the best view of religion to which the limitations of the period had access. There are not wanting students like Mr. J. M. Robertson, one of our best informed mythologists, who declare the New Testament account of the life of Jesus represents the description of an old religious drama rather than a record of actual events. In any case, Shaw offers us dramatized religion "to wake the soul by tender stroke of art."

The idea of the synthetic Bible has also occurred to Mr. H. G. Wells, who, in his *Salvaging of Civilization*, has gone into details on the subject, and has made a list of the works which are worthy of inclusion. Mr. Wells is a great religious teacher, a major prophet proclaiming the new faith; and Shaw makes reference to one of his own characters who was converted by reading H. G. Wells and J. Galsworthy. A conversion, to Shaw, does not mean the mere nerve storm of the popular revivalist. He despises these attempts to make a person emotionally drunk. The conversion he desires is from the concentration of a person's will upon the gratification of individual pleasure to the work of social upliftment. And the head must be concerned in the change as well as the heart.

This explains why he refuses to regard the average Christian as a religious person, and why he often speaks



of religious Atheists. His "God" does not care a straw whether a man believes in "God's" existence or not, providing he is doing the work of the Life Force—or, in other words, is a man of honour serving purposes outside his own personal aims. Belief in his existence seems to be the main demand of the conventional God, and prayer to him the substitute for work.

In spite of much flippancy, Bernard Shaw must be regarded as a deadly serious person—or, perhaps, a "lively" serious person would better meet the case. He has quite a serious conception of religion, but does not object to humour being one of its ingredients. Indeed, Shaw says Jesus Christ made puns! Shaw's motto seems to be "religion without tears." And if Don Juan's heaven would prove a depressing bore to all those without the philosopher's mind, and if the "Ancients" seem more woebegone in demeanour than an underfed cat, Shaw's only advice is that those who cannot appreciate his heaven had better develop the philosophic mind, or be damned in the hell more suited to their unevolved state.

Actually, of course, he swings from a fervent appreciation of art—chosen because it ministers to personal happiness, without which it cannot discipline the soul and senses—to a sort of contempt for those who seek enjoyment from any sort of stimulation of the senses. So he oscillates between the advice to burn, stab, and steal to get money, to a defence of his own good fortune when he lived on sixpence a day, because he could always enjoy for nothing a "magnificent library in Bloomsbury, a priceless gallery in Trafalgar Square," while he needed no cigars or champagne, nor horses which are dangerous and carriages which are sedentary.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DRAMATIC PHILOSOPHER

IN this book I have not attempted to estimate Bernard Shaw's work as an artist, but only as a philosopher. The reader can now understand why G. B. S. has been claimed by various people as a Christian, a Pantheist, a Theosophist, an Atheist, and a follower of Nietzsche. In one sense he is all these; in another he is none. His affinities with, and antipathies to, Christianity have been sufficiently depicted. His "God" is impersonal, being in man and nature, instead of outside pulling the strings. In this sense he is a Pantheist. In his portrayal of the limitations on the freedom of the will imposed by matter and the clash of other wills in our present stage of evolution, and the conception that these limitations will one day be removed by the assimilation of all life with its source until pure thought is alone active, he is in line with Theosophy. His idea of the coming Superman is also closely related to the prophecies anent the "Great Teacher" foretold by Theosophy. On one occasion he referred to Mrs. Besant allowing herself to be converted to Theosophy by Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky after she had refused to be persuaded by similar arguments he had offered her for years. Shaw is still an Atheist regarding the God worshipped by the average Christian, and in any case is not fond of the term as a description of the Life Force which may presently evolve into God.

Much could be said for and against his Nietzschean affinities. He oscillates somewhat in his view of that

eccentric genius, and has probably made no deep study of Nietzsche's philosophy. Shaw borrowed from the German thinker a word, "Superman"; and, like Spencer, who borrowed the word "Sociology" from Comte, he was claimed as a disciple of a man from whom not an idea in his philosophy had been derived. Shaw had his basic conceptions sketched out in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* before he had read a word of Nietzsche, about whom he said in his *Dramatic Opinions*: "Never was there a deafer, blinder, socially and politically inept academician." On the other hand, Nietzsche is later saluted as one of those with the peculiar outlook on life similar to that of Shaw in the Preface to *Man and Superman*; and, later still, the "deaf and blind academician" is hailed as a Vitalist philosopher, whose penetration was so much in advance of that of the Darwinians. Actually, of course, Nietzsche was a Darwinian, being one of that peculiar variety which has so excited the wrath of Shaw, the anti-Socialist and pro-militarist, who regards sympathy and pity as agencies of weakness, and rigorous conditions as essential to the maintenance of a hardy race. Nietzsche glorified the criminal, advocated the whip for women, and was far less solicitous about men than Shaw is about dogs. Shaw in 1905 repudiated the influence of Nietzsche upon his writings, and elevated Butler to the Pantheon instead. Since then Lamarck, in turn, seems to have been made the recipient of biological honours which actually belong to Butler.

It would be interesting to consider why the changes are rung in this manner. It is not merely a matter of mental development, but rather perversity: the Irishman in Shaw enjoys being against the Government, acting on Ibsen's principle that majorities are always wrong. Ibsen and Nietzsche being unhonoured, Shaw applauds them as his inspirers or affinities. The critics

accept his worship as valid, and speak of the resemblances between these men and Shaw. He then repudiates their influence, and gives a further list, chief among which is Samuel Butler, who at once becomes relatively popular. So in turn Lamarck is enthroned in connection with ideas for which, in the mind of Shaw, Butler was certainly more responsible, and the real inspirer is quietly dropped. When a man or a cause is popular Shaw has little use for either. He is the leader of the forlorn hope, the supporter of the despised sect.

He is not converted by heresiarchs—he converts them. Even when they are dead, at his magic touch the dead arise, and become Shavians! His motto is: "Never give the public anything they want—give them something they ought to want and don't." Whereas most men adapt themselves to the colour of the intellectual environment in which they find themselves, Shaw re-acts the other way. When among Christians he applauds the Sceptics, among Atheists he talks reverently about the Holy Ghost. At a demonstration of anti-vivisectors he attacks their fox-hunting and fur-wearing proclivities; before a meeting of the Fabian Society he gets almost fervent in appreciation of the individualism of Ibsen. And both his commendation and his denunciation are couched in the most extravagant language, because he likes to see the fanatics squirm. But, instead, the victims laugh and make his fortune. "In vain do I redouble the violence of the language in which I proclaim my heterodoxies," until "even Atheists reproach me with infidelity and Anarchists with nihilism." But "instead of exclaiming, 'Send this inconceivable Satanist to the stake,' the respectable newspapers pith me by announcing 'another book by this brilliant and thoughtful writer.'"

The very means by which Shaw has battered his way into public recognition have been his undoing; for, like

many another man, he has found that nothing fails like success.

Hubert Bland, a Fabian colleague, remarked some years ago that people do not read Shaw for what he says, but for the way he says it. If he advanced views entirely opposite, he would be just as popular. From Shaw's point of view this is the most serious indictment that could be hurled at his whole career. To merely amuse brings an artist down to the level of the prostitute: she has the same object.

Shaw recognizes some of his drawbacks, for, like electrified wire which under given circumstances yields light and heat, to be a luminous author "I must also be a most intensely refractory person, liable to go out and to go wrong at inconvenient moments, and with incendiary possibilities. These are the faults of my qualities; and I assure you that I sometimes dislike myself so much that, when some irritable reviewer chances at that moment to pitch into me with zest, I feel unspeakably relieved and obliged. But I never dream of reforming, knowing that I must take myself as I am and get what work I can out of myself."

One of Shaw's chief faults—inconsistency of thought, and especially of expression—may be explained by saying he sees life as a dramatist instead of as a philosopher. As a dramatist it is his business to view matters from the angle of various characters who, if they are to reflect life, must naturally have considerable diversity of outlook. His audiences are puzzled, wondering whether this view or that, expressed by a character in a play, represents the author's personal opinion. Shaw boldly, even recklessly, says that he accepts responsibility for all the opinions of his characters who are all right from their point of view, which for the dramatic moment is his own. This is understandable if dramatic art has no

other function than to express the various facets of human nature in an impressive or amusing manner; but if the function of art is, as Shaw believes, to teach, then a man cannot without confusion teach two opposite opinions and claim he believes them both. When, in addition, in his capacity of propagandist-philosopher he delivers in the first person contradictory views, each confidently expressed in the most extreme language, confusion is worse confounded. As a dramatist, when portraying conflicting views in a play, he is on fairly safe ground, for characters are not expected to be alike. But by bringing this dramatic sympathy, without which justice could not be done to every character, into propaganda, and speaking very confidently when only half his mind is convinced, havoc is wrought with Shaw's reputation as a thinker. In the plays the characters appear and say their lines in response to the cue. They are the avenues for the various ideas in the author's mind, and the play unites the diversities. The characters are the symbols of ideas.

On the platform or in the Prefaces the position is reversed. Shaw's words are then the symbols for the characters, and the characters are the various men whose ideas seem to demand expression at the moment. Which character performs depends upon the generalized opinion of the public being addressed. A character who has been neglected, or whose views are unpalatable to the audience, states his case, as interpreted by Shaw, and different actors perform on different occasions. Shaw apparently agrees with them all at the moment they perform; and thus, if one occasion is compared with another, the contradictions are profound. Viewing all his utterances as a single entity, as one may witness a play, the statements may be taken as complementary; but if, like the characters who are right at the moment

they speak, Shaw's opinions are right at the moment they are expressed, the opinions pass like the moment. What is wrong to-day becomes right to-morrow.

The river Thames remains the river Thames though its tides bring different water, bearing different vessels every day. The streams of consciousness pass through the Shavian mind, bearing different messages to the Shavian pen ; but, although neither tidal water nor mental streams ever recur, both vessels and messages re-appear.

Shaw gives us the dramatized essence of all the philosophies, and in so doing he unites very diverse elements in his own mentality. He manages to span from Nietzsche to Bunyan, from Jesus to Ibsen, all of whom he contends preached the same gospel, using different phrases. If the names of Shaw's affinities are arranged in a given order, the gaps do not need to be very great : Jesus, Tolstoy, Bunyan, Blake, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Butler, and Wagner. Between the views of any of these men, with their neighbours, the relationship is definite. Between Jesus and Nietzsche, or some other contrasts in the list, the span may seem immense, but it becomes bridgeable when the other names are inserted.

Shaw's own evolution seems to have been similar to the development portrayed in *Back to Methuselah*—that is, from the free expression of the instincts, finding vent in Anarchistic views, to his interest in the arts of painting, music, and the drama ; on from art to life, represented by his preaching of Socialism and eugenics ; and finally from life to spirit or thought, as represented by his religious philosophy. But it has not been an orderly evolution, for even yet all these elements still find expression. He is an intellectual hybrid, being a Moral Immoralist, a Serious Humourist, a Practical Mystic, an Artistic Puritan, a Free-Will Determinist, an Individual-

istic Socialist; and he has been a religious Atheist. Just as the Life Force in its efforts to evolve new types has produced reptilian birds like the *Archæopteryx*, creatures who are bird, reptile, and animal all in one like the duck-mole, and mixtures like the Ape-man of Java, so in its thrust towards the Superman preliminary experiments like George Bernard Shaw may be heralding the new species.

He pretends he is normal. He will speak of his normal eyesight, and how this is duplicated in his mental vision, when really he has a telescopic eye, with one end of which he views our faults, and with the other inspects our virtues, the diminishing end being turned upon the latter! But he knows he is funny, for he continually laughs at himself. Like John Tanner, he would be lost without a sense of humour.

Bernard Shaw is extremely versatile. He has a sound knowledge of music, painting, and literature; less knowledge of economics, religion, and science; and is weakest upon history and education. His views on children are impracticable, while his conception of women is revealed in a long list of unspanked heroines who, trying enough on the stage, would be unbearable in real life.

Shaw's chief vices as a writer are perversity, exaggeration, inconsistency, and ineradicable juvenility, which make him say the provocative thing rather than the accurate one, preferring to shock rather than to be impartial. He prefers truth to exactitude. His outstanding virtues are public spirit, penetration, imagination, vigour, wit, extraordinary courage, fecundity of ideas, and originality of expression.

He is the greatest living protest against slackness of thought and sickly sentiment, and is the sworn foe of complacency—personal or national. He is a social crusader of the twentieth century, with satire for a sword,



humour for his armour; and with his mighty battle-axe of common sense he batters at the gates of prejudice, and releases in thousands the imprisoned sons and daughters of truth, whose emancipated hands he hopes will build the palaces of the future in which a happier humanity shall dwell. And if some of the structures he tilts at with his fountain-pen turn out to be windmills of his imagination, instead of ogres' castles, after the dust has settled he will be the first to laugh at the blunder.

He is the advance guard of the coming Superman, and, take him all in all, is one of the most remarkable products the Life Force has so far evolved.



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